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ABSTRACT

This workbook contains many outdoor activities which were developed in New York's Central Park to help children explore and understand their city parks. Involvement in the activities is intended to increase appreciation and awareness of the role of parks in the urban environment. The publication can serve as an example of what others can do with similar facilities. (SB)

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# Central Park Workbook

## Activities for an Urban Park

By Robert J. Finkelstein
and the Staff of The Central Park Task Force "Park As School" Program

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# The Central Park Workbook

Activities for an Urban Park

by Robert J. Finkelstein
and the
Staff of The Central Park Task Force 'Park As School' Program
With Special Thanks to Madeleine Dobriner, Donovan and Green

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The activities in the workbook were developed and field-tested, over a four year period, by the Central Park Task Force 'Park As School' Program (Dr. Robert Finkelstein, Program Director; Rhoda Waller, Brooke Elkan, Barry Marshall, Marie Ruby, Geraldine Weinstein). This program, based in New York City's Central Park, works with teachers and students in exploring the curriculum possibilities of the urban park.

The workbook would not have been possible without the creative assistance of our writer, Madeleine Dobriner, our designers, Donovan & Green, and the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Rhoda Waller, our poet, is responsible for many of the poetry activities in the book. Finally the activities were not developed in a void and thus we owe debts of gratitude to many others (too numerous to mention) who also are dedicated to education outside the traditional classroom setting.

# How to Use This Book

**Why an Urban Parks Workbook?**
There are few, very few, environmental education materials which focus on the urban park. Yet parks are critical open spaces in our cities, the city dweller's primary contact point with the "natural" environment. So we offer this workbook to fill this city-felt need in environmental education.

**What's In the Workbook?**
What's the workbook about? Well, it's exploring places and feelings, expanding awareness of your urban park through learning by doing. It's getting involved. Don't just read it like a book. Build your own park experiences—go out and collect information and sensations, use your great ideas and try out our activities.

**Will It Work For You?**
How can you use this workbook? It's been designed for a few or for many. You need no prior skills or facts, no fancy tools or expensive ideas. There are no set expectations on the number of activities you need to use, and we invite you to add your ideas and plans. Everything in this book can be done with minimal preparation and materials.

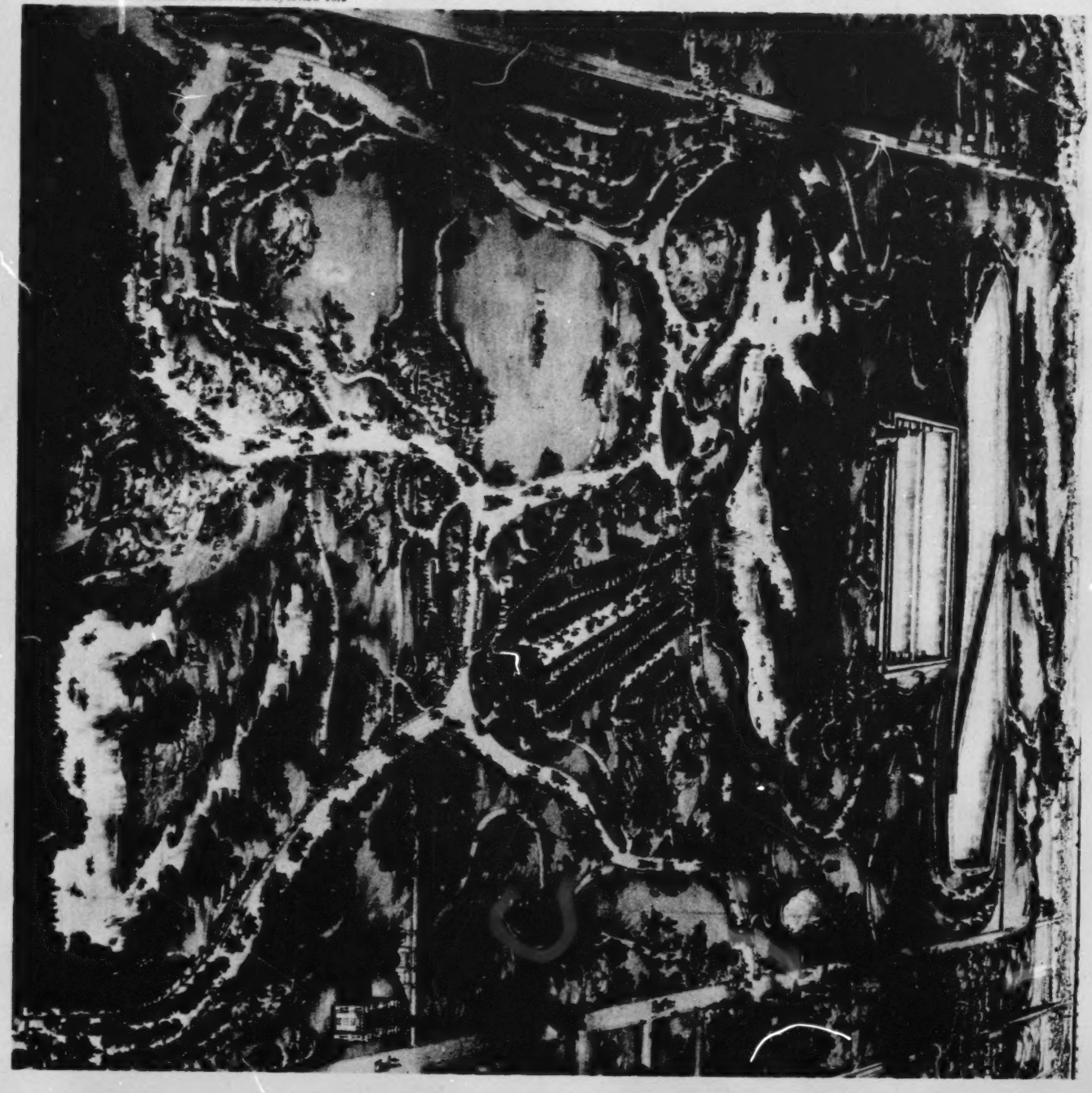
**How To Use the Workbook**
Why do the suggested? And how does sequence matter? Well, the procedures and their purposes are highlighted at the onset of each activity group, and the parts mix and match with those of other chapters. For the more adventurous we have included at the end of each chapter a section entitled "Digging Deeper." What's important here is what *You* want and need to know. The first chapter introduces the whole workbook and its content.

**What Do You Need to Get Started?**
A park is designed nature, events and art, architecture and outdoor rooms, lives and people, and a lot more! In order to explore it we suggest two sets of materials, one for use in a classroom or workspace, the Park Explorer's Work Kit, and an abbreviated version for park expeditions, the Park Explorer's Back Pack. These, along with your eyes, ears, and good senses, are all you'll need to be park experts.

**Park Explorer's Back Pack**
pencils with erasers
bags for collecting
pencil sharpener
small scissors
roll of tape
blank paper for sketching
bandaids
*optional: it's handy if explorers carry a clip board to work on.

**Park Explorer's Work Kit**
paints and containers
magic markers and crayons
pencils and large erasers
rubber cement and sobo glue
clear tape and masking tape
scissors and rulers
scratch paper and colored paper
clay and plasticine
cardboard and tracing paper
old newspapers
large roll of brown postal paper

The J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York



# Chapter 1 The Concept of the Park

It's interesting and exciting to unpack the meaning of "urban park education," for these words provoke many mind pictures and concepts that rise from our own experience. Have you ever really thought about your urban park? *Really* thought about it? Or, come to think of it, what it's doing there? Or how it came to be that way? We consider that park education is not simply nature education within park gates, but suggest that it is much, much more. There is no place quite like our park, Central Park, but chances are that similar comments and concepts can be applied to your park, wherever it is. A park has a story to tell; it's a record of what came before as well as what's happening now. In this workbook we view the park as a work of art, a reservoir of nature in the city, and a setting for human activity. We choose as a common starting point for all three views the need for you to build an awareness and growing definition of your own park concepts.

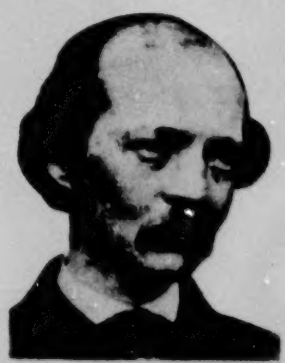
As *art*, Central Park is a masterful work of landscape architecture with its own unique elements of design, texture, form, and color. It is much like a Frank Lloyd Wright building. A masterpiece of its designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, it holds our heritage as well as ourselves. It's developing, changing—it's alive.

Many view the park as *nature in the city*. They see Central Park in terms of its incredible botanical offerings, fantastic and visible beginnings, as well as the scope of its zoological wealth. But these rocks, plants, and animals are not part of a natural eco-system. The park is manmade, designed and built to promote awareness, sensitivity, and appreciation of nature. Not a natural preserve, this park surely is about nature. Like a great garden it offers an urban backyard, a piece of "country" in the city.

To others the same urban park is a *setting*, a kind of stage for our ceremonies, festivals, and activities. For children the park is frequently the playground within the park. For adults it often is seen as the city's place to play—the place to go for sports, politics and cultural events. Parks are for people, after all, places to experience, places to enjoy, and places to participate in the artistry of man and nature.

Having thought it all over, you might see that these three ways of looking at your urban park work best when they build a group portrait. This picture also tells a story, and this park story can provide exciting experiences and learning opportunities for children, indeed for us all.

In this workbook you will find more than ideas and information. We hope you will discover an excitement of exploration as well as methods of carrying out your own park investigation. Wherever you are, whoever you are, however old you bring yourself to your park picture—joyful, noncompetitive, and developmentally relevant adventures lie hiding in your *own* urban park.



Frederick Law Olmsted

Calvert Vaux

# Flushing Out Your Concept of the Park

*Park Explorer's Back Pack*
*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*Map of Central Park*
*(your urban park)*
*Large roll or sheet of paper*

Museum of the City of New York

*Note: Entrance to Greenwood Cemetery 1845*

*Where do you think city people went before there were parks? To the beautiful cemeteries!*

First of all, you have to know where to start. It might be fun, and very important, to find out just what you think a park is, and what ideas other people have. It's a great way of looking at the know-how and information you've already got. One way is to think of a park plan in your mind and another is to describe a park in words.

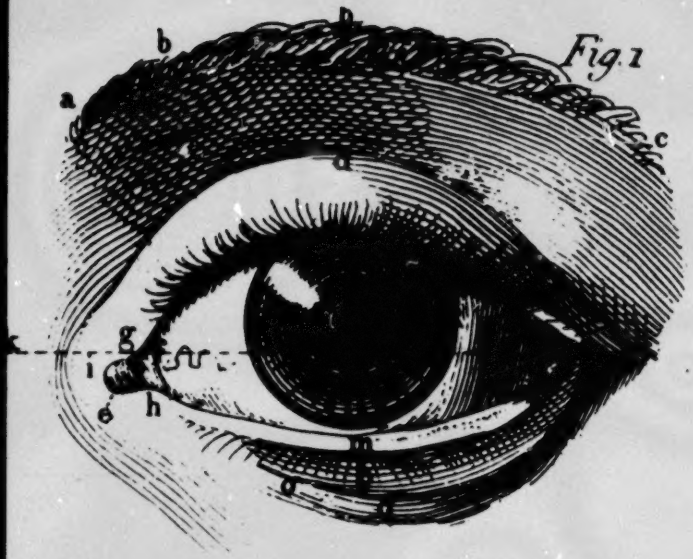
**What is a Park?**
Using the alphabet, make a list of words describing a park. Start with an A-word, then a B-word, and so on. You can even do this with phrases. Read back your ABC Parks lists aloud as word poems. Think about and talk about what clues these park words have given you about *your* park concepts. Chances are that you are jam-packed with ideas!

**Redesign a Park**
Now go to the park and pick a distinct area. We picked the Central Park Reservoir. Walk around, look, and listen. Talk about the purpose of a back-up water supply and the fact that in the future it seems this one will not be needed. It is to become part of the "park lands." Now be designers and replan the use of the reservoir. For this plan there are no rules, restrictions, or limits. You can build, connect, fill in, or take out. You might want to make some quick sketches of how it looks now that you can work with later. Exhibit your finished designs. You will probably discover that you have some strong ideas of how and what a park should be.

**Your Fill-In Park Picture**
Start your own urban park picture that can keep growing as your park ideas grow. Get a big map of Central Park (or your park) and draw a large-scale outline of the park. Think about putting a few important things on your map to act as markers for reading it. This will help you add your new information in the right places. You will have to decide what these important or familiar things will be for *you*. Talk about it. Now, when you start your exploratory park trips, keep the map in a handy spot so that you can begin to fill it in when you get back. As you can easily see, the map needs to be *big!*

# Locating the Park in Your World

*Pencils and paper*
*City maps (as big as possible)*
*Street maps (in N.Y., of Manhattan)*




*You can't get lost in our park. On every lamppost there's four numbers (for example, 7405), the first two numbers tell you the closest cross street (for example, 74th. Street).*

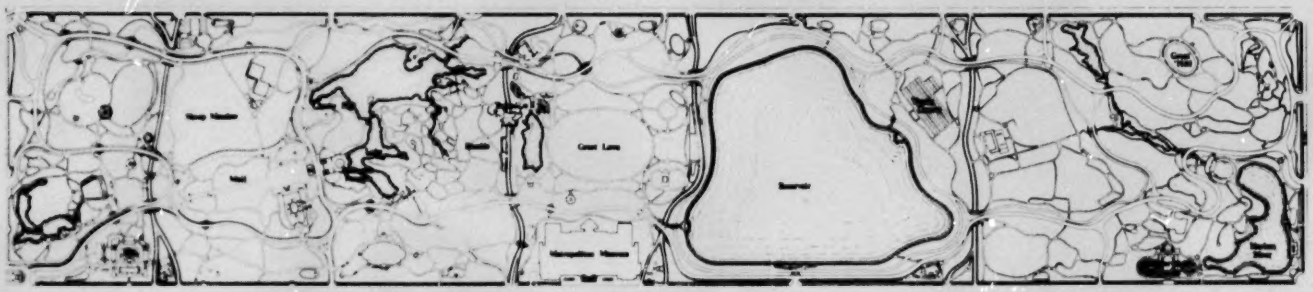
Now that you know how you feel about parks, and have found out what some other people think, let's find a way to look at your urban park and where it is in your city. To puzzle this out, let's make some maps.

**A "How Do You Go?" Mental Map**

Close your eyes and try to see a picture in your mind of the pathway or trip that you take to get to your park. Think of the most important things you pass; the way you go; your favorite part of the trip; and, when you get there, the way the park looks. *Now* make a map to show other people how you get there. Try to capture the distance and the kind of trip it is. If you use your good sense, the bits and pieces will go together. *Remember* that a map is to show someone else what you know. They have to be able to *"read"* it. Puzzling out how to make a good map will teach you a lot about map reading.

**The Official City Map**

The nice thing about urban parks is that they belong to everybody. Because everybody comes to the park from a different spot, the city map can show *many* people how *they* can get to the park. Did you ever think of how the park fits into this city picture? Now get out those city maps.



*Bet you thought Central Park got its name from being in the center of the city. Well it really got its name from being the land surrounding the old Central Reservoir.*

***What shape is the park?***
***What shape is the city?***
***How much of the city is park?***
***Is there a lot of other park space in your city?***
***Is there a lot of empty space in your city?***
***How many ways can you get to the park?***
***From what directions?***

Sit down and take a minute to think about what all these answers tell you about your park.

# Contrasting the Park and the City

*To build an understanding that part of the concept of the park lies in the contrast between park and city.*

*Street map of Manhattan*
*Tracing paper*
*Park Explorer's Back Pack*

Getting a feel for your park with your eyes and your body will help you collect clues about the recipe, or plan, that was used to make it the way it is now. Have you ever wondered how come it's made that way?

**Looking with Open Eyes**

Get out a map of Manhattan. Notice the crooked look of the streets at the tip below Houston Street. Did you know that old streets were planned to follow streams, footpaths, and lanes? Now look at the rest of the city uptown. It has a new and very special pattern. It's clever and orderly. See if you can draw or trace this pattern and give a name to it, and its shapes. Next look at a map of Central Park and draw or trace the roads, pathways, and water bodies. What kinds of patterns can you find? Are they like the city streets? This is a great time to discover places in the park where people have put special patterns and geometric shapes on the land for different reasons. How many can you find?

**Listening with Open Ears**

Listening carefully is harder than it seems. It takes time to get your ears working, so *slow down*. Start with yourself. Shut your eyes and hear the sounds that are inside you. Bet there are more than you thought! Here's how to practice hearing with other people: gather ideas, objects, and ways for making sounds. Close your eyes and guess what each sound could be. Write down your guess on paper. Later, share your laundry lists of sound guesses. For most of us, open eyes help us to make meaning out of sounds. Get together and make a sound story or poem. Use you new words for sounds (from your lists), and also what you found out about listening. Be fanciful, be crazy, maybe you can even invent new sounds!

**Park and City Songs**

Take a long, slow walk to search out sounds around your school or neighborhood. Make a list, make a rhyme or riddle, build a song, or build a word to mimic a sound. Above all, try to make your sounds tell something about your street walk so that when you hear the sounds, you feel the streets.

Okay, now take a second slow, sound-searching walk to the park. Use the same collecting tricks you used on your street walk. Close and open your eyes; work alone and together; be silent and then noisy (does this change park sounds)? Try to make your word picture or sound poem tell so much about your walk that it makes you hear and feel the park.

# Digging Deeper

*If you feel you want to go further with an activity, consider these ideas.*

*Art Nouveau books from your library*
*Large roll or sheet of paper*
*Park Explorer's Back Pack*
*Tape recorder*

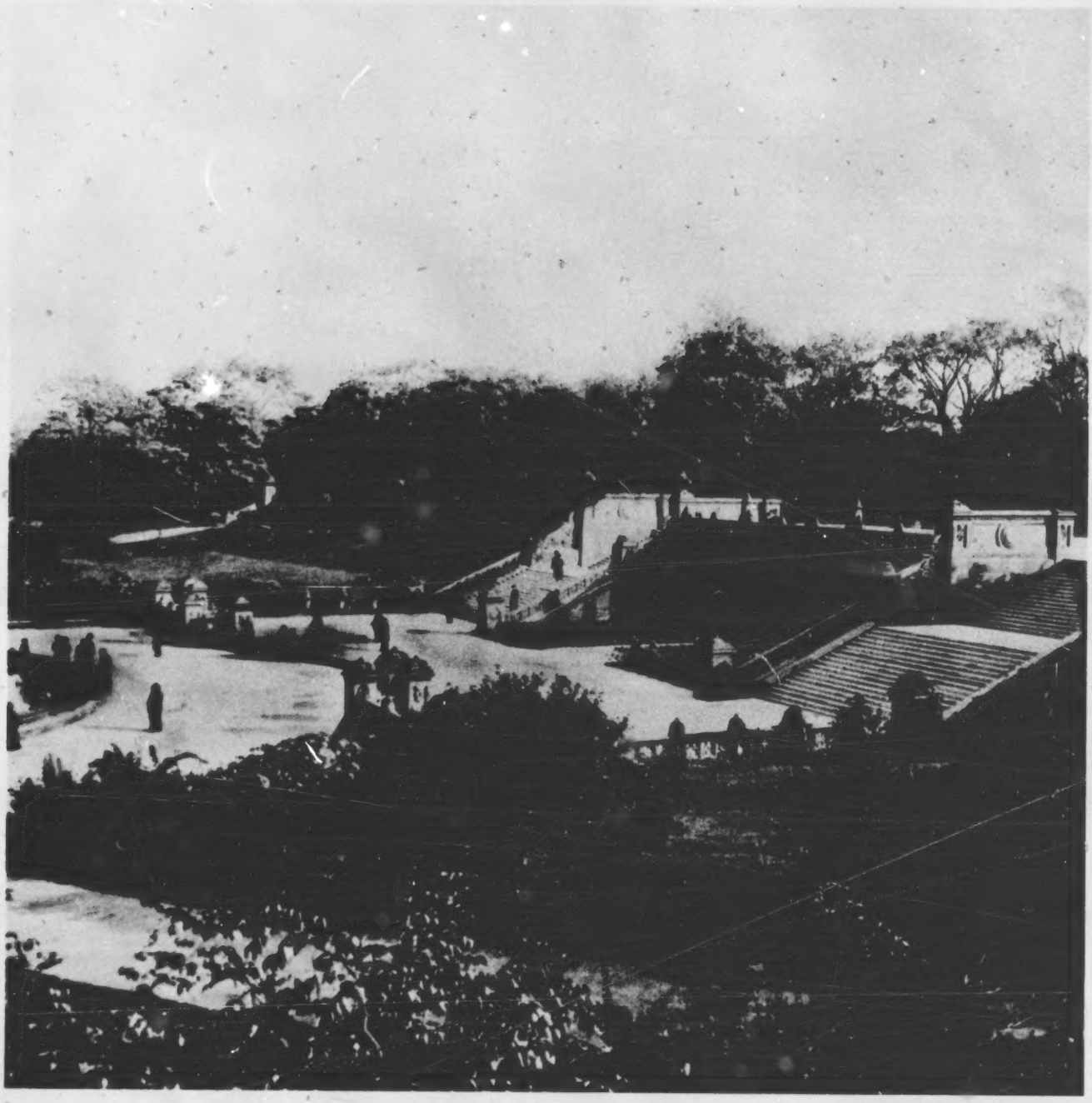
Sometimes it's important to go further, to give elbow room to your ideas so that they can grow even bigger!

**Be an Advertising Designer**
Using the organic and geometric patterns that you traced or found in your map work, create a poster advertising Central Park (or your park). Be on the lookout for ways to capture the feel of organized nature. You might like to use Olmsted's rule for no straight lines and lots of open space. What rules did you find for your park that you can catch and show in your poster language? Draw it, paint it, do a collage.

**And how about Signs?**
Take a look at the signs around your park. Draw or photograph them. Note what colors, sizes, and shapes they are. Do they *fit in* with your urban park's special look? Pick the one you hate the most, or almost missed! You need to think about what it says, where it is, and why it's there. Now, *go redesign it*. Remember, somebody out there needs to read it. You might find it fascinating to look at some Art Nouveau design. See if you can discover how to use its organic quality in your sign. Come to think of it, a shape can tell you something without words.

*Which is the most popular: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yankee Stadium, the Statue of Liberty or Central Park? You guessed it, our park. In 1978 there were two times more park people than museum people; four times more park people than stadium goers; and eight times more park visitors than visited the famous Ms. Liberty.*

**A City Sound Symphony**
There's more to urban park education than the streets and the park. That's the whole point. The excitement, delight, and experience lies in the difference between city and park. Contrast is the clue here. But you're in charge, see for yourself. Using your city sounds collected on your sound walks, organize a street band and a park band. Each probably needs a conductor, or leader, to direct it. Use voices or instruments to make your city sounds, and compose a piece about the park or street. It works best to think of a beginning, a middle and an end. You will surely have to help the conductors think up signals for louder, softer, all together, one sound only, as well as fast and slow. Try each band song for only a minute, *or* until you get the feel for how to work together. Your compositions can get longer and more complicated as you practice. Have each band listen to the other, and maybe recording will help "being serious." The nice thing about tape is that both bands can listen and think together about the sounds captured from street walk and park walk, from city sounds. Just think, you could always draw to the tempo and images that your city symphonies suggest.



Museum of the City of New York

# Chapter 2 The Park as Work of Art

Did you ever notice that a park is like a building? Buildings are constructed by people, and for most of us that's pretty easy to see. But seeing the manmade aspects of our parks is really much more difficult. It's a simple concept to understand, but just very hard to see. It takes a lot of looking to discover how the park that makes you feel nature so strongly is a delightful trickery of landscape architecture that knits together the city and country.

Houses, as we all know, are built at a certain time and have histories. Your urban park has such a history, too. It has a story you can find and figure out. Did you know that Central Park, being the first park in the United States, is the source of many urban parks throughout the country?

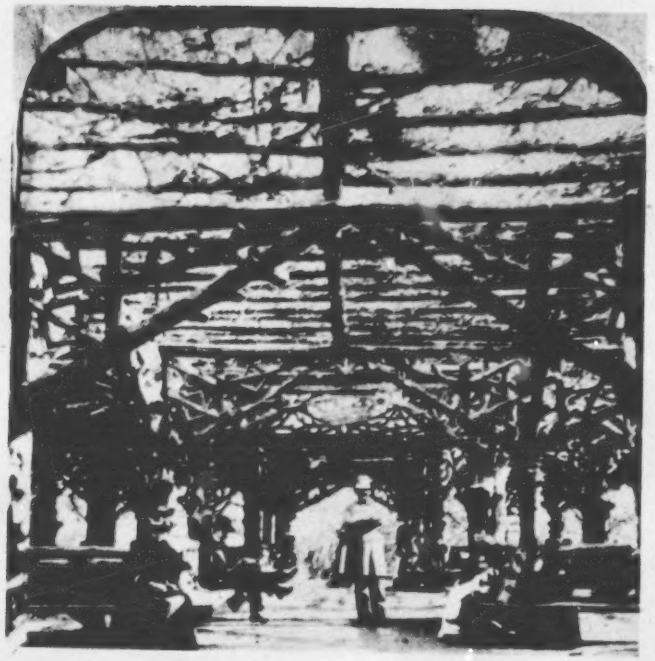
Buildings have different styles and looks, and so do parks. Think of your park. The picture of it that you can hold in your mind probably has a lot to do with a mix of shapes and parts that go together in a special way. That's its style or park-look. Central Park has a plan that makes it appear like country—a naturalistic style, carefully built in by its designers.

There's more art to landscaping a park than most of us realize. This park architecture has manmade parts much like our houses. Of course, buildings have doors, windows, floors, and stairways. But did you ever think that parks have doorways or gates, and windows which are vistas to park views and city views? Parks have rooms, too: outdoor rooms, which are called spaces. These spaces are filled with park furniture like lamposts, benches, and trashbaskets that make these public rooms more useful.

The buildings, the streets, the subways and the curves of the park meadows are all alike in having been designed and made by man. For all these reasons parks are *part of*, not separate from, *the built environment*. Pieces of art and works of landscape architecture, they are not fenced-in natural areas. They are planned and built by people for people to use and love, and celebrate nature in.

# A Park is Architecture

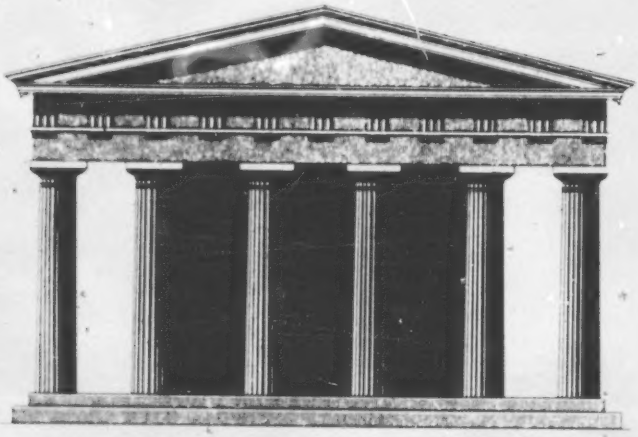
*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*Large roll or sheets of paper*
*Cardboard sheets*



Seeing the park as a built place will give it a new meaning all its own. Don't expect to be able to think this way without practice. But all the stuff you know about buildings will set you on the right track.

**A Park is like a Building?**

Well, what makes a building anyway? Gather together a kind of dictionary definition that includes parts and uses of buildings. How about creating a cartoon! A cartoon that shows those parts and uses: the function of the building as well as how the building is connected to the street. If list-making is easier for you, make a list. Think about indoors and outdoors, and how and where they are connected in a house. Then think of what parts a building has on the inside and on the outside. Think of what the building is made of, and the different systems that a useful building needs. Just what is it about the structure that makes all these parts work together as one whole building? Perhaps you want to include also the different people that were needed to build your building. An outline drawing might make it easier to see the answers. If you write words on it in balloons you'll end up with a building cartoon. The next step is to find connections between this cartoon and your park. Many of the analogies are there. They really are. Can you find them?



**An Invitation and a Barrier**

Think of a doorway, any doorway. What message would it give if it could speak? Make several small pictures of different doorways and their messages. If you compare your sketches with those of other people, you're bound to learn a lot about different kinds of exits and entrances. Think of a cathedral, a mansion, a jail, or department store. What do doorways tell you about what's inside, or who is welcome? Try your hand at designing an entrance that makes a statement. How about a doorway for school or your own room? Make it large enough to stand up—cardboard is good for this. Do you want to know what messages your door gives other people? Pass out small bits of paper for comments. Doing this with a whole bunch of people and their doors can be fabulous. Now that you have so much information about public and private spaces and their doorways, think about how this all works in parks. Start planning *your* park entrances.

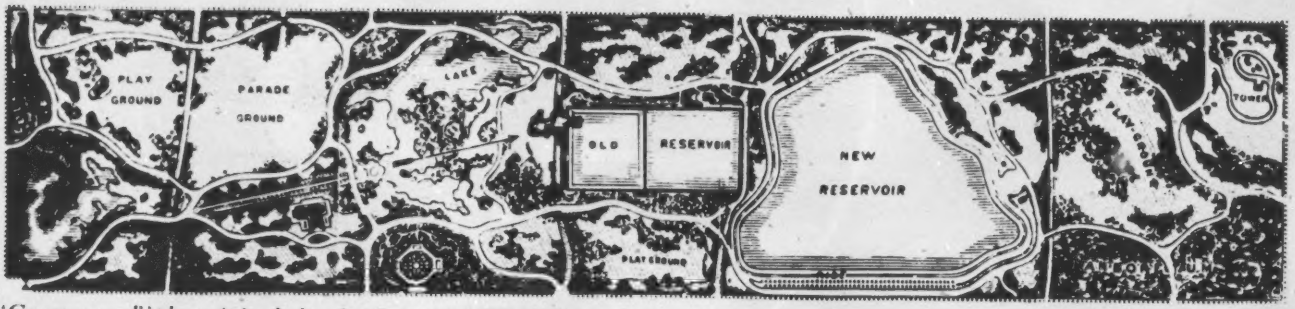
Photo Madeleine Dobrinet

**This Space Belongs to You**

Do you have a magic place or secret space that gives you strong feelings? Does it make you powerful? Or special? Or safe? Do you ever walk into a spot that feels like it belongs to you? Well, adopt a space now! For this hunt you need a large piece of paper, and yourself. Stand on your paper, relax, and when you're ready lean down and draw with a marker your own personal space. Write your name on it. It's yours. Now cut out your space so that you can carry it with you! Go space searching in an indoor work place and find your favorite spot. Favorites are fun. Settle into it on your cut-out. If you do this with other people, you will see a whole pattern of spaces when you get up. Stand back and take a look at what kinds of places are picked and how close they are, and tell each other what your spaces feel like. You might be in the mood to write on your cut-out space. Think about your absolutely most favorite space any place and write a few words describing it. Does it have anything at all to do with the space you just picked? *Now*, take a trip outside. Bring all your people spaces with you, go to the park, and put them in a favorite kind of outdoor spot. Stand back again and look. Get a talk going on feelings about outdoor space. Boy, have things changed—or have they?

# A Built Park Starts with a Plan

*Paper and pencils*
*Large aluminum roasting pans*
*Park materials: rocks, dirt, plants*
*General arts and*
*crafts supplies*




*"Greensward" the original plan for Central Park, 1858*

The J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York

*The word 'parkway' is an Olmsted invention. It literally means the way to the park. Olmsted and Vaux designed the first parkway in the United States—Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.*

Any set of parts is just a jumble of junk until it's put into order. Parts in order is really what a system is all about, and a park has many systems. In fact, a park is really a system itself, isn't it?

**It's All in the Contents**

Like a good recipe in which all the ingredients combine to create a distinctive dish, a park has contents that fill it out in a certain way. To design a park you must first think of what you need to put in your park. Stop and consider your own room. It's organized in some way that works for you, and has most of what you need on hand inside it. Kitchens have different contents and plans. Why is that? Think about who uses it, for what, and in what way. What do you need inside your park? Think about who uses it, for what, and in what way. Any ideas?

**Going Places**

Did you ever consider the people paths, and car pathways in the city? Look at your city block. Where are those pathways? Where do people paths and car paths meet? How do they connect to the city all around? Get out some paper and make a list of all the kinds of paths you will need to put in your park. We thought of paths for walkers, bikers, horseback riders, and bus drivers. But maybe cars will not be allowed in your park. *You* have to choose. Plan some pathways and think of this:

Where can you go?
How can you get back again?
Is it dangerous? How about when paths meet?
Do you always have to go the same way?
Are there surprises and are there choices?
You might very well want to go down to your park and do some watching.

*Drinking fountain for horses*

*Bee-hive in Ramble*

*Our park, Central Park was a major civil war public works project. It involved planting a formidable five million trees, shrubs and vines — moving an incredible 4,825,000 cubic yards of stone, earth and top soil-working for fifteen years to build this 840 acres of urban park. It is similar in effort to the building of a great pyramid.*

**Try Out a Park for Size**

Get a large roasting pan and some park building materials and be a landscape architect. A good way to start is to sit down and just stare at your pan and all the parts and materials you have to plan into it. Be fanciful, be wild, but be smart about limits. Think about how deep, short, shallow, upcurving, or wide your park can be in your particular pan. Take another look at that park space and decide how big a person would be inside of it. Make that person out of stiff paper and tape it to your park to help you keep your plan to scale. Scale is how the size of one object relates to the sizes of surrounding objects. To keep your park plans and contents in scale, just check every part out next to your person. If they look right, put them in your park. What do you want to include? *You* must decide. Start with small pebbles and cover those with soil. You are the builder. Where do things go and what will they be? You might want to consider:

water bodies
roads
bridges
paths
buildings
greenery
gateways
hills or rocks

and more!

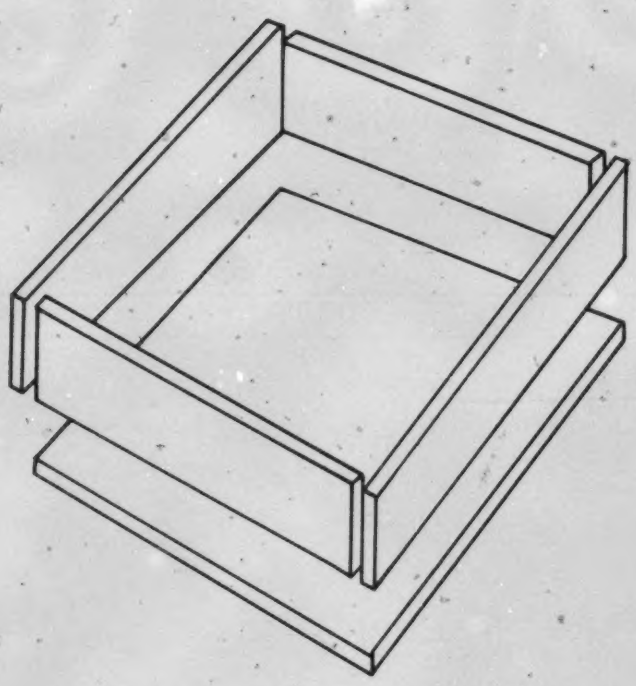
# A Model Park is a Vehicle for Understanding.

*pebbles or gravel for a 2-inch base*
*yardstick*
*masking tape, paper and pencils*
*electric jigsaw (easily borrowed)*
*2 Pieces of tri-wall 30 x 40 inches*
*a double thickness of heavy plastic 50 x 60 inches*
*Epoxy-type glue or Sobo or Elmers*
*50 to 100 lbs. potting soil*

A model park is exciting to build and a terrific way to include all the special information you have collected. Using information makes being an expert fun. Beginners at the designing game tend to want more space, so if there's a big sandbox free your problems are solved. Use it to build bigger and better parks. The more people you ask to join you the more ideas you will have—if there are lots of hands, organize park crews and split up the work.

**Build a Park Box**

If you need to make a park box, here's how: Start with one tri-wall piece. This is your box bottom. Mark and cut the second piece to form the sides.



Cut the side pieces first and then the ends. Just remember, the ends must fit inside the side walls. A metal jigsaw blade will give you super-smooth ends. Sand them to get the tightest fit for gluing. Here's where you call friends to chip in. Spread glue on the bottom edges of the two long side pieces. At the same time have friends spread a line of glue along the box bottom. Work quickly, and don't let that glue dry! Now get together and press the sides firmly into place. Remember to match up the edge all along the bottom. Be strong, and have a strong pusher in the center of the side. Okay, now that you have know-how and experience, do the same on the box ends. Just match the corners very well and tape them overnight. The next day is the right time to waterproof the box. Put the doubled rectangle of plastic into your new box bottom. Smooth it out and work it so that the extra plastic overlaps *evenly* all around. Tuck and fold the corners. Pretend you are making a bed! Use tape to hold the corners down. Be neat, but don't worry; the soil will push out small wrinkles.

**What's It Made Of?**

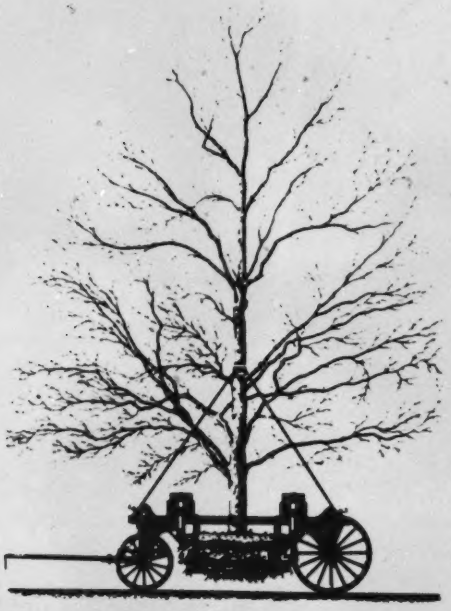
A park builder's crew must always be alert to bits of rubble that can be used to make great park models. That old junk you have been saving or find on the street may just make the best tunnels, bridges, and gateways you have ever seen. Get going! Collect materials for water bodies, hills, pathways, and buildings. Remember to think about sizes, and if you are very clever, you will find things that fit in with your park look. Natural colors and materials are often the nicest. Think about what those might be. Here's a list of some tricks we have used, but your genius is always best. Your park should be full of *your* big ideas.

The Bettmann Archives Inc

Paths: moss, sawdust, crushed twigs, cloth, sand
Shelters and fences: twigs, stones with plasticine or clay, cardboard, toothpicks
Streams: plastic tubing cut in half and sunk to edges in soil
Tunnels: tin cans buried in soil banks, stones with plasticine or clay
Meadows: grass seed or wild flower seed
People and Animals: clay, plasticine, or wood
Greenery: different sized and textured plants

**How Should It Look?**

Now, some build-a-park workers need to begin on paper. Since your park box is quite large, there are a number of ways to do interesting things. If you begin with the park shape (ours is a rectangle) and draw up several plans that are small but full of ideas, you will have choices to vote on. Talk it all out. You may even argue, but decide on a best plan, or, say, combine parts of several plans that you like. Put that great plan on paper the size of your park box and you're ready to build a park! Start with gravel for drainage, add soil and rocks, then plants, pathways, and park furniture. WOW!

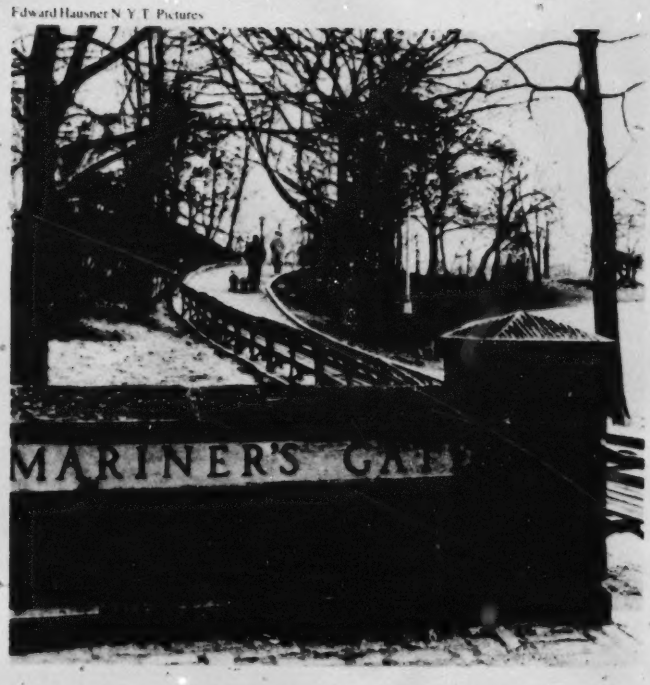


*The largest tree in the park is sixty two inches around. It is a London Plane tree that stands at the northeastern corner of the Reservoir.*

# Digging Deeper
# Taking It All One Step Further

*Park Explorer's Work Kit*

Edward Hausner N. Y. T. Pictures




*Artisans' Gate (CPS, 7th A)*
*Artists' Gate (CPS, A of Am)*
*Boys' Gate (100, CPW)*
*Children's Gate (64, 5th A)*
*Engineer's Gate (90, 5th A)*
*Farmers' Gate (CPN, Lenox A)*
*Girls' Gate (102, 5th A)*
*Hunters' Gate (81, CPW)*
*Inventors' Gate (72, 5th A)*
*Mariner's Gate (85, CPW)*
*Merchants' Gate (Columbus Circle)*
*Miners' Gate (79, 5th A)*
*Naturalists' Gate (Explorers') (77, CPW)*
*Pioneers' Gate (Frawley Circle)*
*Prophets' Gate (Gate of All Saints) (96, CPW)*
*Scholars' Gate (60, 5th A)*
*Strangers' Gate (106, CPW)*
*Students' Gate (67, 5th A)*
*Vanderbilt Gate (105, 5th A)*
*Warriors' Gate (Army & Navy) (CPN, Powell B)*
*Woman's Gate (72, CPW)*
*Woodman's Gate (96 5th A)*

There's probably no better way to understand the possibilities of park parts than by fully experiencing them. Take a trip, get your body to the park. And while you are there just think about how it changes and who keeps it all in shape. Someone makes sure that the weather and visitors and growing things don't erase those wonderful surfaces, surprises, and views.

**A Trip off the Asphalt Path**

Ramble down an unsurfaced path. It will tell you a lot about where you are. Pick a place to go which has a variety of path surfaces. Try a zoo, park, or museum, or even a school. It happens that if you are in our city, the New York Botanical Garden has great paths to follow. Try out your feet on *bark chip* and *tile* in the Conservatory, *pea gravel* in the Rose Garden, or a *brick path* at the Herb Garden nearby. Grey *bluestone chips* are in the Rock Garden and *cinders, sawdust,* and *woodchips* lie among the Native Plants. It won't be long before you discover new sights, sounds, and feelings as your feet go along. Bring along your friends. No doubt reactions will differ. Try out this questionnaire whenever you have finished walking a new and different path.

## *Questionnaire*

1. *Was the path hard or soft on your feet?*
2. *Was the path quiet to walk on, or did it make a loud noise when you moved along? What was the sound?*
3. *Did the path go in a straight line (like a city street) or in a curvy sort of line (like a country road)?*
4. *What did the path remind you of?*
5. *Did the path have a smell?*
6. *Would the path be easy to take care of, or difficult?*
7. *Was the path slippery to walk on?*
8. *Did you want to stay on the path?*
9. *Did you like this path?*
10. *If you like it, say why! If you didn't like it, say why not!*

Edward Hausner N. Y. T. Pictures

***Vanderbilt Gate***

*New York's Park Commissioner is in charge of 25,000 acres of parkland. And what that really means is:*

| | |
|---|---|
| *1400 facilities* | *104 swimming pools* |
| *900 playgrounds* | *13 golf courses* |
| *550 malls, squares and triangles* | *7 skating rinks* |
| | *6 beaches* |
| *890 playing fields* | *3 major zoos.* |
| *535 tennis courts* | |

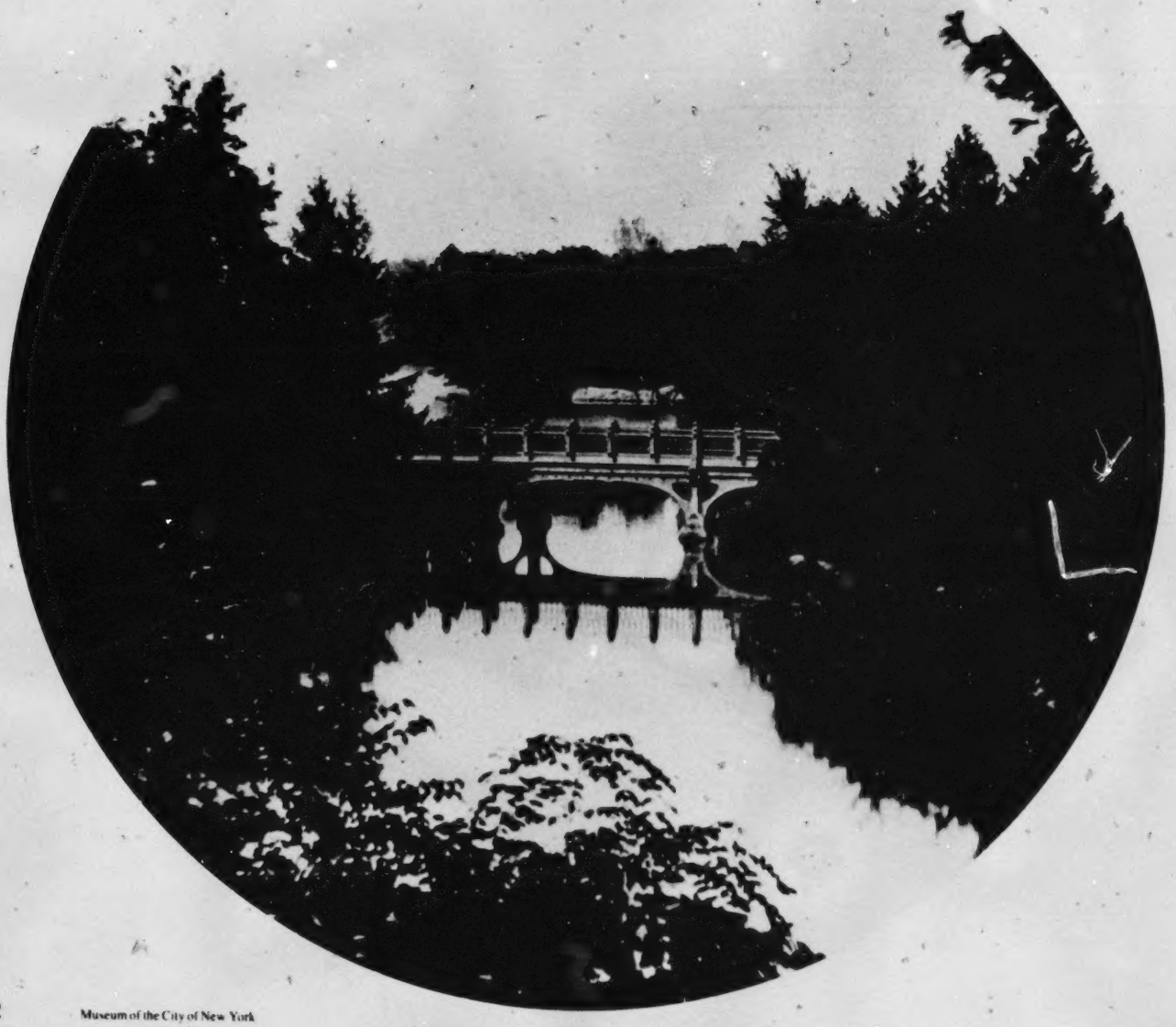
*Be careful, then, when you choose your park commissioner. He's important.*

**The Ins and Outs of a Park**

An entry is really a mouth. It swallows you up and brings you into a new place. Take a trip to look at the entrances to your urban park. In Central Park a grand way to start is at Grand Army Plaza. It's all in a word. Did you ever consider how an entry and its name go together? Well, take a look! Having seen that one, it's a help to explore some more. Think about what you learned about doorways and messages. It's a name game, and the invitation should fit. What do you think? Remember that Central Park was designed for everyone. If your city is New York, there are other interesting entrances and exits in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

**Keeping it all Straight**

If you're into building park models, keeping track of it all is an important way to measure how far you've come. It's not in an instant that you become an expert. How about this: Elect a Park Commissioner, a person in charge of groundskeepers and maintenance crews. Who else do you need in *your* park? To keep the park in good shape you need to keep good records of how much water you use, and when new plants and structures need repair. And what about changes that occur, or special events? In Central Park this is the job of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. You might like to share these jobs, keep charts, take photos, or draw pictures to record changes, problems, or all those incredible successes!





Museum of the City of New York

# Chapter 3 The Park as Nature in the City

Some people go around the world to see cypress swamps, exotic plants, wading birds, and birds of prey. However, do you know what you might see in your urban park? Right here in Central Park are bald cypresses, herons, hawks, horsechestnuts from Turkey, and ginkgo trees from China. Many who conceive of the park as "nature in the city" will appreciate the flora, fauna, and geology of our park. Central Park is rich in plant material, animal life, and geological history. When Olmsted and Vaux walked the land of the park on winter nights under the light of the moon, they were concerned with the growth of the city and with the city dwellers' increasing lack of contact with nature. Their park design, a design to hold nature in its own house, was concerned with arousing feelings through different landscapes and surprise views.

When you walk through the southern end of our park and gaze at its outcroppings, it is well to stop and reflect that these rocks are the eroded stumps of an ancient mountain range. When you see grooves that run northwest to southeast in the rocks, it is fascinating to think that these were made 44,000 to 13,000 years ago by a glacier as tall as the Empire State Building. Touch those grooves. You are touching something made thousands of years ago!

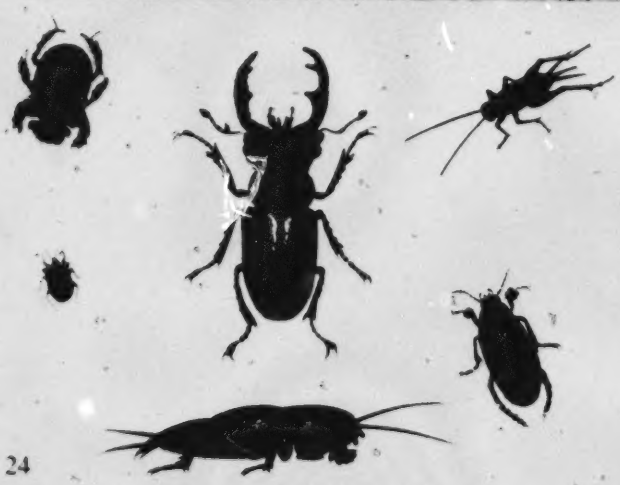
Where else in Manhattan can you see what is reputed to be the largest Chinese elm in the United States, or the largest remaining stand of American elms in the northeast? Many city dwellers never see the scarlet tanager, the black crowned night heron perching in the Ramble, the kingfisher fishing in the 74th Street lake, or the red-shouldered hawk circling over Vaux's Bow Bridge. But they're there. Right in the middle of one of the world's biggest cities.

Your urban park is an important treasure house of "nature in the city." How to approach the natural history of that park is our purpose, and to explore the therapeutic and uplifting feelings associated with a place that has the magical appearance of rolling countryside in the bustle of city life.

# Focusing Through Hunting and Collecting.

*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*Several fresh pineapples*
*Collected park materials*
*Bulletin board or long roll of wide paper*

Picture Collection, Branch Libraries, New York Public Library, New York Herald Tribune



Collecting and looking help to build stronger feelings for nature as well as stronger vocabularies and images. The more we see the more we know, and the more we know about something the more connected to it we usually feel. Go out and find a horsechestnut. Give it a polish and put it in your pocket. It will make you feel rich, and if you let it, it will even make you grin.

**A Very Square Survey**

What you need for this exploration are four straight, knee-high sticks and your own two eyes. Go to a corner of the park that you want to explore and rustle up those four sticks. Place them on the ground in a square, tip-to-tip. Okay, just what do you think can be found in that square *on* the ground and *in* the ground in your Park? Make a list, draw sketches, do some digging, make a collection. See what you can discover about the feels, smells, shapes, and colors of your earthy square.

**Read Aloud Picture**

You usually don't examine an object carefully unless you want to duplicate it. But just this once, examine a pineapple the way Wallace Stevens does. Use his words and look at a real pineapple at the same time. Get someone to read aloud so you can look *and* listen:

*The hut stands by itself beneath the palms.*
*Out of the bottle the green genii come.*
*A vine has climbed the other side of the wall.*
*The sea is spouting upward out of rocks.*
*The symbol of feasts and of oblivion.*
*White city, pink sun, trees on a distant peak.*
*These losenges are nailed up lattices.*
*The owl sits hum ed. It has a hundred eyes.*
*The coconut and ockerel in one.*
*This is how yesterday's volcano looks.*
*This is an island Palahude by name.*
*An uncivil shape like a gigantic haw.*

(Wallace Stevens, *"Someone Puts A Pineapple Together"*)

Find the word pictures on your pineapple. Touch the parts with your fingers. Get out your favorite object that you collected one time out in the park. Write some of your own word-pictures or poems that include the images you can find in your favorite object. Have a pineapple snack while you're thinking and looking. Share your ideas and your fruit.

**Tree Sense**

Using a large roll of brown wrapping paper or a bulletin board, divide the largest rectangle you can work with into four parts. One person or a team of people can work on each part. The idea here is to build the best picture of a tree that you can. Choose four different kinds—you will be amazed at the tree family's range of looks and sizes. Trees have personality and body shape and even colors, just like people. Each tree space might end up with an overall view of form, bark, leaves, flowers, and fruit. Here are some tree-hunting and capturing techniques we used.

Tree Form

Drawings: full view, top view, from ground up, upside down, seasonal variations. To determine the tree's girth hug the tree by holding hands with your friends. To determine the height of your tree let a friend with an easy height (4 or 5 feet) be a tree yardstick. Estimate the number of times the person need stand on his own shoulders, in a stack, to be as tall as the tree.

To determine the spread of the tree measure the tree's shadow.

Bark

Do bark rubbings to appreciate the bark's texture and patterns. Match paint store chips to determine the bark's true color. (Question: Are trees really brown?)

Leaves

Press leaves or make leaf rubbings. Do a print with blueprint paper by following these simple instructions: Place the leaf on the paper and expose it to sunlight. After the paper turns color rinse the blueprint paper in a solution of hydrogen peroxide (from any drugstore).

Flower and Fruit

Press some blossoms, collect some seeds, collect nuts, pods, cones, or the fruit of your tree.

Expecially energetic tree explorers will have an interesting time writing a myth explaining why that kind of tree ended up being the way it is. Think of all the information you have. It's like writing science fiction—some solid facts and a lot of imagination. You think now that it's all over—you know that tree pretty well? Make cardboard cut-outs of tree leaves. Place them in a bag. Put your hands inside. *Now*, can you find your tree's leaf by feel?

# Reading the Landscape: Rocks and Soil.

*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*3 shoe boxes, soil, grass seed, mulch or leaves*

The natural surface of Manhattan is a mystery lost to our eyes, buried under endless squares of sidewalk. But, luckily for us, some of the greatest clues lie in Central Park, visible to us without digging or fancy tools, or even complex scientific information.

**Rocks are Bones**

Rocks are the skeleton of the land. Take a good hard look at a rock outcropping in your park. What's an outcropping? Well, it's probably the largest rock shape that you can find, like a sort of rock hill. Do you ever use these huge humps for lookouts? Castles? Backrests? Well, stop climbing for a minute and explore that rock. Does it sit on top of the grass like someone threw it there? How *did* it get there? How hard is it? How heavy? Can you make it move? Move about ten steps back and draw the shape of your rock. Discover which way it leans, then lie down against the rock and feel the angle of its slope with your body. Reach out and get the feel of its surface in your hands. Can you draw that texture, or find words to describe it? Add that information to your picture. What about its colors? Do they change from place to place? Do those places have the same bumpiness or smoothness as its other parts? How do you think your rock got there? Write a story about it. When you do this, think about bigness. Compare your rock to the natural things around it.

**How the Mountains Came to New York and Where They Went**

Here's a detective story that's really incredible. Not only is it quite a tale, but it happened in your own backyard and all around you; in your city park and under the city where you can't even see it. The clues are the rocks you've explored. Those rocks, those very same rocks were as high as mountains! What happened to them? Well, that's the riddle after all.

A very long time ago our area was covered by water. Small plants and animals fell from the surface to the bottom and formed a layer of sediment like mud. Over the years more layers of mud formed on top of the first layer, and with the weight of the water it pressed the bottom layers into sedimentary rock. About four hundred and fifty million years ago heat and pressure inside the earth built up so much that it pushed these layers of rock up into mountains. All that heat changed the fairly soft sedimentary rock into much harder metamorphic rock. One hundred million years later

the continents collided—imagine that! This added more mountains, huge mountains as much as five miles high, or as tall as Mt. Everest. Then, for millions and millions of years, and that's a lot of years, the mountains were worn away by rain, were chipped by winds blowing sandy grit, and were split and splintered by ice that collected in their cracks, until the mountains were worn down to the size they are today. The clues are there in your rocks. But where? Well, it's easiest to see in what happened next. Between 40 and 13,000 years ago the weather turned cold and the ice age settled on the land. A glacier, a wall of ice as tall as the Empire State Building, moved down from the North, picking up boulders and loose rocks along the way. And then this glacer came to our worn-down mountain stumps and left its mark. The rubble it dragged along underneath it scratched deep grooves into our rocks, and polished their surfaces. Go to the park and touch the long grooves in the rocks. For you see, those stumps of ancient mountains that the glacier so deeply scraped *are* the rock outcroppings in our Central Park.

And when you do look and feel, do it with the eyes and hands of a detective. All right, so it's pretty amazing, but what about it? This story is not finished. You can see it going on now.

**Today's Weather Report**

Glaciers are old news, very old in fact, but pretending to be one might tell you an awful lot about strength and movement. Create a people-glacier by holding hands. Walk, crawl, roll or scramble across a rock. Ice is strong, and it shapes the ground it passes over by dragging things underneath it that push and pull and cut away. Melted ice, or water, is an amazing force. If you want to test this out, you need three shoe boxes. Build the same soil hill in *all* three boxes. Leave one hill just as it is, plant grass seed on another, and put a layer of leaves or mulch on the third. Water each one lightly. For this experiement you need to let the grass seed grow. So for a few days while you're waiting, you might make predictions about what will happen to your three hills. Which hill will last the longest and keep its shape the best as you water it? This is an experiment in erosion, or how weather changes the land. As soon as you have a grassy hill, begin to water all those boxes every day. Keep a record of what you see happening, perhaps using words in a chart, or a visual record like a picture or photograph. Which hill will be the strongest and last the longest? When you see what happens in your boxes, go out into your park and look for evidence of weather changes. Can you discover ways to *save* a part of *your* park? It might be fun to get permission to really do the work you think is necessary.

*There's a continuous weather record in Central Park daily from 1869 till this very day. One day in 1903 it rained 11.17 inches and in the year 1947, if you can believe it, it snowed down 67.2 inches of snow.*

# Reading the Landscape: Animals in Our Park.

*Some muddy park places or a snowy day*

There are more life stories in the park than those of the plants and of the rocks. What about the animals it houses and feeds, and the people and their pets that pass through it every day? A park can record the many different happenings each park day. Can you interpret the life-signs it records?

**Doodle a Track**

Some winter fun with tracks in the snow is a good way to begin to unravel the riddle of what creatures leave behind them. Try a few of these out on some interested guessers.

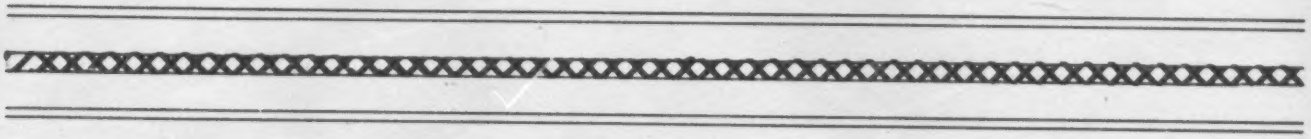
1. a bike
2. cross country skiier
3. grocery bike
4. a left-handed person walking a dog

Take a walk in the new-fallen snow in your neighborhood or near your school. Find some tracks, draw them, and present them as a riddle to a friend. No snow? Well, think of sand or mud. In fact, you might make some tracks yourself.

1

2

3



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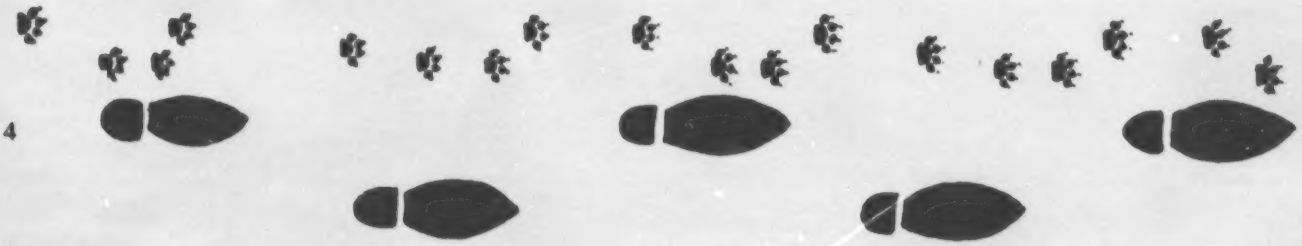
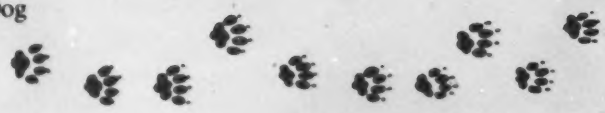


Dog



Cat

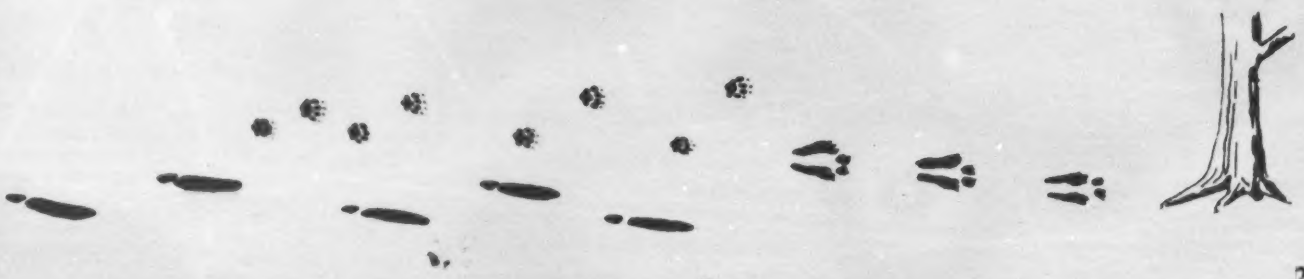
Squirrel

Bear

**The Maps That Walkers Make**

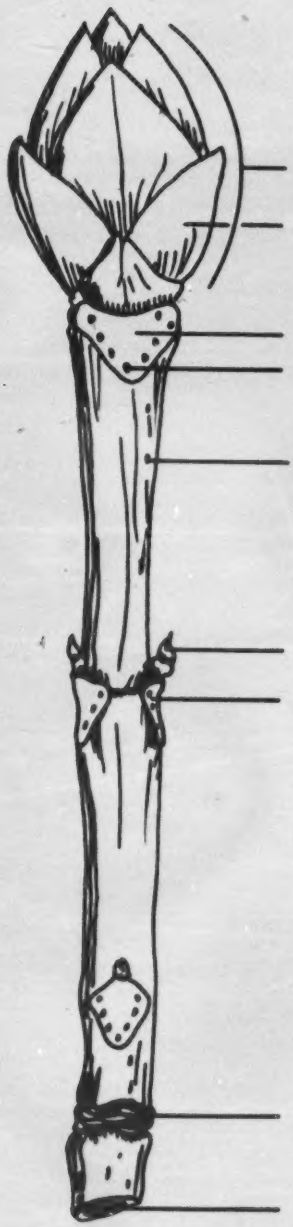
Hundreds of stories are written in the park snows and muddy hideouts. In order to read them you have to know what to look for. We've all seen thousands, perhaps even millions of dog tracks written on park snow. Did you ever look at them closely? Do you recognize them? How do you know that they're the tracks of man's best friend? Are you really sure? Take a good hard look at the track. Do you see claw marks? If you do then the track is not a cat track since cats usually retract their claws when walking. Do you see four tracks or two tracks? The dog is a much clumsier walker than the cat. The cat registers its tracks—places its hind feet quietly where its front feet went before. That's why you'll only find two tracks. Well now that you know the difference between dogs and cats, how about the common squirrel? Squirrels are easy to find in the park, and their tracks are all over the place. Did you realize that rodents, and squirrels are rodents, have five toes on their back feet and only four on their front feet? Being climbing animals, they line up their back and front feet when bounding through the snow. How about more exotic animals? Well you already know lions, tigers and wolves! How's that? Well lions and tigers are felines and wolves are canines and animals in the same family have similar feet. Dogs and cats can teach you a lot. Here's one more: the bear. Did you notice that, like us, it has a big toe? But unlike us, the bear's big toe is on the outside of the foot. Seriously, take another look.

What do you suppose is the silent story here? Make up your own tracking story and try it out on a friend. Take an expedition to find some silent stories in the snow and mud of your park. Remember, being a good tracker takes patience, keen eyes, and careful searching for clues.



# Digging Deeper For Those Who Want to Take a Closer Look

*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*Magnifying glasses*




Taking another look at what we see every day is what this book is all about. When you think of all those sticks you've walked over, kicked, or sharpened on the sidewalk; all those squirrels you've passed by or tried to catch; all those dandelions you've picked for a bouquet or blown on for a wish—have you ever stopped to think what you really know about them?

**It's All In a Twig**

It turns out that a twig is a very fancy find. Pick up a newly fallen winter twig, one with all its parts intact. Or go to a vacant lot and prune yourself a nice fresh juicy one. Go inside to a warm place, sit down and really examine that twig. Try to draw it. The more detail you can muster, the more you'll see. If you have a magnifying glass handy, you will find things no one else can! That bump on the tip, if there is one, is an end bud. The bud of a new leaf or blossom, or even both. Did you see the scales on that bud that protect its tender insides? What color is *your* bud—maybe brown, red, green, or yellow? Those buds on the sides are, as you might guess, side buds. Are yours opposite each other? Or do they alternate, one then another, down the twig? The marks under the buds are called leaf scars. That's where the old leaf was attached, the one that fell off in the fall. Now really look into that leaf scar. Those dots you see are vascular bundles, and are the remains of structures like pipes that carried food and water from and to that leaf. All those smallish spots along your twig are called lenticels. Like tiny mouths they allow the exchange of gasses between the tree and the park air, like breathing. Your stick has a center, or pith, which is a storage space for food in the twig. And here's the best! If you can find some wavey lines all pushed together in a ring, you have found a year scar. It's where the tree began to grow each year. Count those scars to see how old your twig is. How old is it?

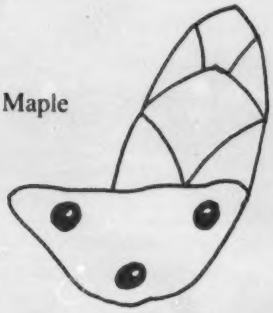
Photo by George Bassat

**Hunting Tree Spirits**

Primitive peoples believed in tree spirits. Have you heard the good luck expression "knock on wood"? Did you ever wonder what that meant? Well, it comes from the belief that gods lives in trees and that you can ask them for favors by knocking on the bark. Many leaf scars look like faces. Go on a tree-spirit hunt in your park, and take along a magnifying glass. Look at twigs and draw the cartoon-like faces you discover. Here are some tree spirit faces of our park.

Maple

Walnut

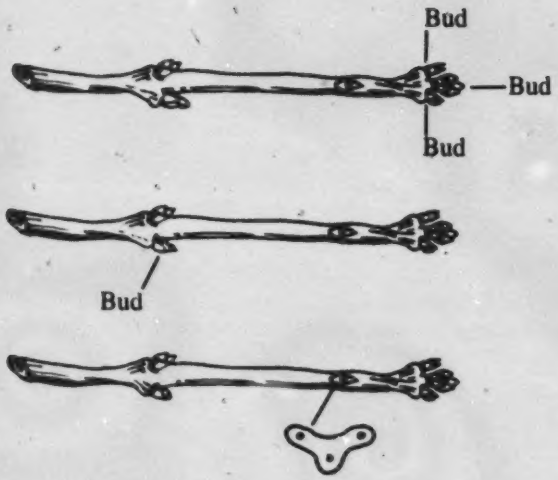


Elm

Black Locust

**Reading a Twig**

Now that you've learned the vocabulary of a twig, how about reading it? It's got its name written on it. And like a mystery language you have to learn the secret. A secret you can share with the trees. Take a short trip outside and gather yourself some twigs. If you go out in the late fall when leaves are on the trees, you shouldn't have any trouble finding maple, tree of heaven, elm or tulip. Take a tree book along if it helps you. When you get back, strip off the leaves so that what you have is like a winter twig. All you really need are a few. Just mix them up so you don't know which is which any more. See if you can read the tree secrets hidden in your twigs. Identify them with our clues. (Sheets to follow form clues)

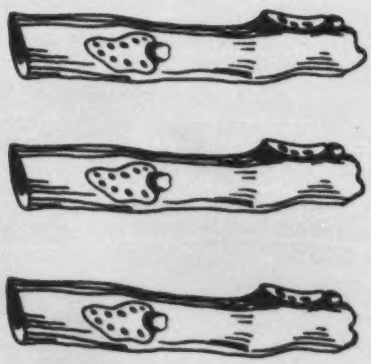



**Clue 1**—If you look very carefully at the end of the twig does it look like this?

**Clue 2**—Are the buds on the side of the twig opposite one another?

**Clue 3**—Do the scars under the buds look like thin narrow faces with 2 eyes and a nose?

If so the Tree is a **Maple.**



**Clue 1**—Is the twig larger than most other twigs?

**Clue 2**—Does the twig have big leaf scars and small buds?

**Clue 3**—When you look at the twig more carefully, does it not have a bud at the end of the twig?

**Clue 4**—If you look at the center of the twig, is it colored like Skippy peanut butter?

If so it's a **Tree of Heaven.**

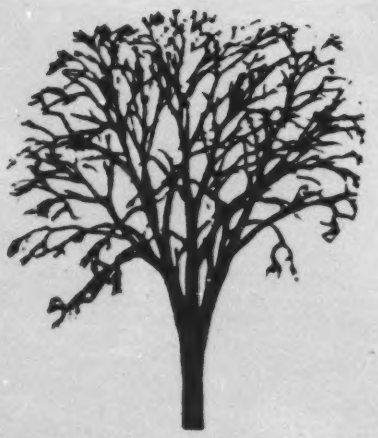
**Clue 1**—Are the buds rather flat-shaped—like a duck's bill?

**Clue 2**—Are there circles going completely around the twig at various points?

**Clue 3**—If you carefully open the bud at the end of the twig do you find a folded up little leaf shaped like the picture below?

**Clue 4**—If you scrape a little bit of bark off the twig with your fingernail, does the twig smell like a lime?

If so the Tree is a **Tulip Tree.**



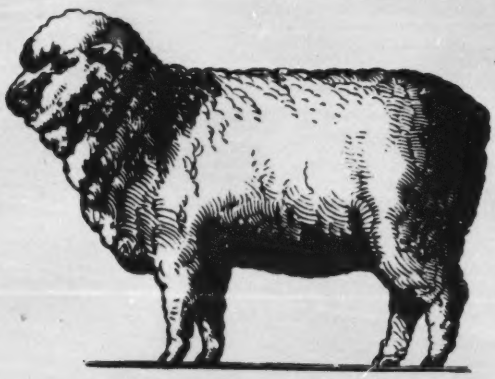
**Clue 1**—Look at how the buds are arranged on the side of the twig. Are they arranged in such a way that every other bud is on a line with the other?

**Clue 2**—Look at the bud and the leaf scar together under a magnifying glass. Do you see what looks like a hat sitting at a crooked angle on a face?

**Clue 3**—Look at the form or shape of the tree. Is is shaped in the form of a Y? (Some say that it has the form of a fountain.)

If so the Tree is an **Elm Tree.**

Picture Collection, Branch Libraries, New York Public Library



*Sheep in the Sheep Meadow, deer in the Deer Paddock, what next will we do with animals in our park? Olmsted had the idea of not centralizing the animals in a zoo but of spreading them around the park. What do you think: flight of fancy or good idea?*

**Just Plain Squirrels**

Animal know-how is something you can build. Think of your common park animals, and how much you actually know about them. Where, for instance, are most park squirrels found? In what part of your park? In the woods? In the meadows? Near entrances? Have you found them? Well, are they shy or bold? Just how close can you get to a squirrel before it runs away? How close can come to a pigeon, a starling, or a sparrow? How close can I come to you? What is *your* flight distance? A country squirrel, if given a choice, will choose hickory nuts over all other kinds. Are city squirrels the same? Check it out, offer a choice. We feed squirrels peanuts, but are they really good for squirrels? Animals are architects. Did you ever think about that? Nobody builds a squirrel's house but a squirrel. What does a squirrel's nest look like? Where is it found? That bushy tail is good for something, but what? Do some watching and find out. Do squirrels take trips like us? Do they journey to other parks? Do Central Park grey squirrels travel the whole park? How big is the grey squirrel's territory and how big is yours? You can answer all these questions right there in the park.

**The All-Too Common Dandelion**

What do lions have to do with dandelions?
Cut up a dandelion leaf lengthwise and take a look at it. What do you think? You see, a Frenchman once thought that the leaf looked just like lion's teeth! And so he named the flower, *dents de lion*. Break the root of a dandelion and watch the white juice come out. This liquid is latex, a kind of rubber. Did you know that the Russians during World War II made dandelion tires? Look at each part of the dandelion. From the *roots* you can make coffee, from the *leaves* an incredible salad, from the buds an edible omelette, and from the *flower*, of course, dandelion wine! Can you think of any other plant that is so useful? When you think of it, can you think of any other plant that is so successful? It grows everywhere! There's a wonderful myth about the dandelion:

***Once upon a time the South Wind felt heavy and lazy and rested under a magnolia tree. It looked out on the field and saw a maiden with beautiful golden hair. It wanted to call out to her but it was so lazy that it just couldn't. The same***

*thing happened for the next three days. It was just so lazy it couldn't make the effort to speak to the beautiful maiden with golden hair.*

*On the fourth day the South Wind looked out on the field and lo and behold, instead of the beautiful maiden with golden hair it saw an old woman with silvery gray hair. It thought, "My cousin, the North Wind must have come and laid its hand of frost on the beautiful maiden." The South Wind then gave a great sigh and by mistake blew off all the silvery hair of the old woman.*

*Of course, you know that the next spring when the South Wind came it looked and, sure enough, it once again beheld the beautiful maiden with golden hair.*

That's one dandelion story, but what's yours? To get your best ideas it's probably a good idea to inspect, and really marvel at, the "all-too-common" dandelion.

**Imagine That**

When rocks and plants and animals come together, they form an environment. The environment that surrounds an animal or person is its natural habitat. A zoo is a very unnatural habitat for any creature, but it can be made as much like where the animal really lives as possible. Take a trip to your zoo and think about habitat while you are there (animals *and* plants *and* rocks). Choose your favorite animal and do some research on its environment. Redesign a great zoo home. Use pictures and books and even museums to find out what you need to know! It's easy and fun. If many of you all do this together, when you set up your model habitats you will be able to organize a whole new zoo. In our Central Park Zoo this kind of zoo rethinking is going to happen very soon. The New York Zoological Society is going to rebuild the animals' habitats. Maybe your plans will discover important new ways of going about this. As caring park citizens, you could even send your plans to the society.

Museum of the City of New York

# Chapter 4 The Park as Setting

The park is not only a work of landscape art and architecture, not only a reservoir of "nature in the city", but also a setting for all sorts of human activity. For many people the park is the city at play.

Central Park, for example, is a place to go to enjoy, a place where you can jog, walk, bike, and row. It gives you places to sled, skate, ski, or go horseback riding; a field to fill with baseball games, soccer, or kites and frisbees. It's a chance to hear free concerts, to picnic and attend political rallies. And what more? It's a trip to the zoo or carousel, and it's whatever it is for you!

To delete people from the park would be to rob it of part of its life. People endow parks with energy, changes, and movement; their memories provide a rich history and dimension to its story.

To rob the park of people would be a serious mistake. The people within Central Park are necessary to make Olmsted's carefully planned impact of "setting" a reality. It's a setting devised to have universal access, central location, and to be provocative in its power to arouse response and feelings. The park's meaning is expressed in this letter:

*Gentlemen:*

*I read the article in the June 14th issue of the New York Magazine on keeping Central Park green.*

*It touched deep well-springs of memories of my life. I lived during 1916–20 on Third Avenue between 97th and 98th streets. My mother was a working mother (then!) and in her hours off—between 3 and 7—she took me to the park.*

*There was a park employee, who each evening took down the flag from its pole, while I recited the Pledge of Allegiance for which he waited patiently and without amusement (that I could discern). The thrill of the American flag remains with me; I have never lost the feeling of what this country could accomplish in spite of the dismal happenings of these last few decades.*

*There was a greenhouse nearby where Mama and I walked; the smells still remain with me, as well as the warmth and feeling of the greenhouse. There Mama made friends with the employees and I don't know who profited more; she of the green thumbs and all green fingers or they with their experience and plants.*

*At the end of her life, I was most happy because she lived in a Home for the Aged on Fifth Avenue at 104th Street. Each day—nice or not—the kindly policeman on the beat, stopped traffic for "Rosie" to cross the street and walk—not for very long any more—and sit in The Park on "her" bench.*

*From the living room of the Home, one looked out over the park—just like the millionaires, living on lower Fifth Avenue.*

*Central Park is part of my childhood. It was a charmed spot in a child's life; in my mother's hard working life; in a city that then offered few "cultural" opportunities for the city's poor—the Park and the Museum—they were central and important foci of my life. I hope that they continue to be for the children of New York.*

*With every good wish for The Park and all the devoted people who will keep it green, I am*
*Very sincerely yours,*
*Mrs. H. D. Multer*

The letter's poetry suggests that there is more to park education than science education. The arts have a special place. We would like to explore the use of park space as a setting, a setting that acts as a catalyst for response. A park is a museum of contemporary culture and a chance to just plain enjoy. It offers us a stage for expression and interpretation.

# The Gifts of Nature and Imagination

*Mostly yourself but some*
*pencils and paper, too.*

Places become personal as we have experiences in them, and as those experiences change our viewpoint and stretch our emotions. We begin to feel closer to that setting. Arts can give us ownership of our world and ourselves through creative use of language, ceremony, and storytelling.

**The Gift**

The Kwakiutl Indians of the Northwest practice a custom of the "potlatch." A man shows his wealth by giving away his possessions in a gift-giving ceremony. His wealth is measured by the gifts he can give to others. Have your own gift-giving park ceremony and share its secrets with yourself and others. The park offers many gifts. Just think about it: the rainbow, the colors of fall, its odors, and the fruits on its floor. Explore an area of your park and discover a wonderful gift to share. Write it on a piece of paper. Join together in a circle (circles feel right) and offer your park-gifts. Saying them aloud will start to build a ceremony, and the sounds and images of your words will capture park riches. Add gestures to go with your offering words and your ceremonies will get grander and more powerful!

***Gift Event in Central Park***

*I give you the water as blue as the sky.*
*I give you a butterfly because I want you to fly around.*

*I give you the trees to remind you of green beans.*
*Te regalo ese palo porque esta lindo y bello.*

*Te doy el arbol que tiene hojas verdes.*
*Te regalo las piedras que son tan grandes y bellas.*
*Te regalo el agua que corre por los rios.*

*Te doy este cielo para que lo mantengas lindo.*
*Te doy esta pluma de pajaro para que to recuerdes de mi.*

*I give you the sky that's as white as snow.*
*I give you the lake as clear as can be.*
*I give you the rocks grey as mud.*
*I give you the sun yellow like crossing lights.*
*I give you the grass that is as green as summer leaves.*

*Te regalo el cielo azul.*
*I give you the trees that don't have any leaves. . . .*

(Fourth Grade bilingual class, P.S. 179)

### A New Park You

Names are very special words. A name is part of who you are; it was given to *you* to be yours to keep when you were born. Did you ever consider that if you chose a second name, a new name, that it could tell more about who you are now? For many American Indians the naming of things has a mysterious power and importance. They take on many names with special meanings and qualities that change as they change during their lives. Go to the park. Think, dream and stare. Find a "park something" that tells about or feels like you. Discover and pick a special p.rk name that you can give yourself. Here are some Indian names that nature brought to them in their spaces:

*Soaring Eagle*

*Sitting Bull*

*Wild Horse Which Rides Free in the Morning*

Once you have your new name, write a few lines explaining why it's your name and how it feels to live inside of it. You could also design a symbol to go with it—a sign that tells more about the name, you, and the powerful and beautiful things you share with nature.

### A Turn For Telling

Of course, as any explorer or inventor will tell you, there's more to discovery than just a great idea or finding something new. It takes a new connection or a new thought to understand and use the object or idea. A myth is often an explanation of nature. It tells all that is, and all that happens. Did you ever imagine the stories behind your park or consider its phenomena? Park-bench history needs a story teller and with your eyes and ears it could be *you!* Here are our wonderings. Maybe you will explain them:

What makes the grass green?
How did the rainbow come to be?
Where are the shadows? To whom do they belong?
Why does the willow weep?
How did the hawthorn get its thorns?

What about the first paper boat on the pond, the balloon that always gets free, or maybe, just maybe, you've got some questions of your own. Here's a myth to read to get started:

***The Origin of Baseball***

*Someone had been walking and out*
*Of the world without coming*
*To much decision about anything.*
*The sun seemed too hot most of the time.*
*There weren't enough birds around*
*And the hills had a silly look*
*When he got on top of one.*
*The girls in heaven, however, thought*
*Nothing of asking to see his watch*
*Like you would want someone to tell*
*A joke—"Time," they'd say, "what's*
*That mean—time?", laughing with the edges*
*Of their white mouths, like a flutter of paper*
*In a madhouse. And he'd stumble over*
*General Sherman or Elizabeth B.*
*Browning, muttering, "Can't you keep*
*Your big wings out of the aisle?" But down*
*Again, there'd be millions of people without*
*Enough to eat and men with guns just*
*Standing there shooting each other.*

*So he wanted to throw something*
*And he picked up a baseball.*

Kenneth Patchen

Myths make excellent plays. Write it down, act it out. Use your subject in the park as a backdrop for your performance. If you create an audience of friends and passers-by, you can end by inviting them to myth-build. Ask them their ideas on how park things came into existence.

Associated Press

# The Gentler Forms of Recreation

*Pen and pencil*

The park is a perfect setting for renewing your acquaintance with yourself, for renewing your love of nature, and expressing your feelings and sensitivities. It is the place to daydream, to see, and to feel. The setting for re-creating through play and reflection.

**Daydreaming**

Do you ever pause, just simply stop and open yourself to what you find in front of you? A ten-year-old once looked at a lily, gazed then stared into it, meditated and then entered his own dreams.

***Lily***

*As I watched a lily*
*it became a cave.*
*Outside it was white,*
*inside it was shining.*
*As I went into the cave*
*there was a door.*
*As I opened the door*
*there was a water pool.*
*Water of the camellia*
*tastes good.*
*What is the taste of*
*the lily's water?*

(Richard Lewis and Haruna Kimura eds., *There are Two Lives)*

Now you try. While in the park, pick anything you especially fancy and really look at it. Meditate and enter your own world, your own daydreams. By all means don't keep it all cooped up within yourself. Express your feelings and discoveries to others who are important to you.

**Reflections**

Have you time to look into the mirror of the water, like May Swenson?

*In the pond in the park*
*all things are doubled:*
*Long buildings hang and*
*wriggle gentle. Chimneys*
*are bent legs bouncing*
*on clouds below. A flag*
*wags like a fishhook*
*down there in the sky.*

*The arched stone bridge*
*is an eye, with underlid*
*in the water. In its lens*
*dip crinkled heads with hats*
*that don't fall off. Dogs go by,*
*barking on their backs.*
*a baby, taken to feed the*
*ducks, dangles upside-down,*
*a pink balloon for a buoy.*

*Treetops deploy a haze of*
*cherry bloom for roots,*
*where birds coast belly-up*
*in the glass bowl of a hill;*
*from its bottom a bunch*
*of peanut-munching children;*
*is suspended by their*
*sneakers, waveringly.*

*A swan with twin necks*
*forming the figure three,*
*steers between two dimpled*
*towers doubled. Fondly*
*hissing, she kisses herself,*
*and all the scene is troubled:*
*water-windows splinter,*
*tree-limbs tangle, the bridge*
*folds like a fan.*

(May Swenson, *"Water Picture"*)

Take a trip to some watery areas in your park and see what you can see. Look first at the real thing, then at its water picture, its reflection. Write about the wonders of the differences you see. Want to challenge yourself? Look at water that's moving, rushing along, *or* just a small bit of water like a puddle by your foot. Capture what you see there.

Museum of the City of New York

***Snowfall***

Take a special look at newly fallen snow.

*Let us walk in the white snow*
*In a soundless space;*
*With footsteps quiet and slow,*
*At a tranquil pace,*
*Under veils of white lace.*

*I shall go shod in silk,*
*And you in wool,*
*White as a white cow's milk,*
*More beautiful*
*Than the breast of a gull.*

*We shall walk through the still town*
*In a windless peace;*
*We shall step upon white down,*
*Upon silver fleece,*
*Upon softer than these.*

*We shall walk in velvet shoes;*
*wherever we go*
*Silence will fall like dews*
*On white silence below,*
*We shall walk in the snow.*

(Elinor Wylie *"Velvet Shoes"*)

12

Choose a few words, important snow words. Build a poem by using and repeating those words. We chose: *dance, ice, pale, gold, cold, crystal*. Six words because snowflakes have six sides. Three P.S. 3 students created this group snow-poem.

***A Cold Winter Night***

*Here is the dance*
*so icy and cold*
*The flake is ice.*
*Its color is pale,*
*shining like gold,*
*A beautiful crystal.*

*Delicate like a crystal,*
*The maze of the dance,*
*Labyrinth of gold,*
*It warms your heart as it coldly*
*Falls on your warm, pale*
*hands, turning them to ice.*

*In a burrow under the ice,*
*Round a table of crystal,*
*A family of rabbits eating pale*
*Winter cabbage as children dance*
*On the shining cold*
*Ring of gold.*

*Ice bricks looking like gold*
*As children pile the ice*
*Around a cold*
*Snowman whose eyes of crystal*
*Make rainbows dance*
*In the evenings on the pale*

*Snow. The pale*
*solstice moon waiting for the golden*
*Morning sun dancing*
*On the ice*
*Creating illusions like crystals*
*Melting in the dimmering cold.*

*The dimmering cold pale*
*Crystal night waiting for the gold*
*Bricks of ice to melt into a trickling dance.*

You know, it's a shame to file away poems. How about writing them on paper snowflakes? Fill your room with a snow fall of mobiles and words.

# Digging Deeper
# Taking It All One Step Further

*Magic cameras (see text)*

We all have millions of experiences, some exciting, some boring, and some new. The arts join you to your experiences in new and exciting ways.

**Read a Park**
Choose a park part to be your own. Don't tell what it is. Make it a mystery. See if you can figure out a way to re-create its feeling, size, and look with your own body language. Discover its sounds. Try out your voice in inventive ways, or use a word that sounds like what it means. How about "sssnakey" for example? Maybe your mystery object hasn't got a sound. If it did, what would it be? How does its park setting touch your mood? How many ways can you show this? What clothes would you like to wear in that setting and how would you move in them? Look at your park-part. Find its movements, exaggerate them with your face and hands. Using props will help. It's an incredible feeling to belong to the park. Maybe it can't move. What would it do if it could? Trying this all out near your mystery object in its setting will support your ideas and bring them alive. Can people guess what you are? *Yes?*

**Magic Camera**
Gather together some interesting junk to look through. You are going to look at the park world in a new way. You must be able to use this camera to really see things. We used:
Cardboard tubes: try long ones and short ones
Tin cans with shiny insides and both ends cut out (juice cans are good)
Shoe boxes with tiny holes in each end and dark insides to peer through
Glass bottles, prisms, and mirrors

But as far as anybody knows there must be millions of looking tools that *you* can invent. Bring those along also! When you get to the park, pick a setting you know already, a site you've seen. Before you use your magic cameras, think about seeing with both eyes, one eye, and blinking eyes. Using your camera, look up at something and down on it. Try out a new viewpoint on that setting by kneeling, lying on your side, or standing extremely close or very far away. Hold your favorite picture of it in your mind so you can use it or share it later. Figure out the movement that helped you to discover it. *Now* focus on one thing like a tree, a bench, a bridge, or small flower. Explore it thoroughly with your magic cameras. Trade cameras so you can look with several kinds. Look at all its parts, at the spaces surrounding

it, and where it touches other things. Record your observations. See if you can find one image of that cloud or tree that no one else has ever seen before. When you can see so intently, you can discover incredible images and create amazing new pictures of it or words about it. You will find a new kind of bridge or tree experience. That's called artistic vision! Put what you've seen into words and you will have scenic adjectives. Take these words out with you into the city or out into the park and see if they capture the feelings of our environment.

The Brooklyn Museum

**Word Play**

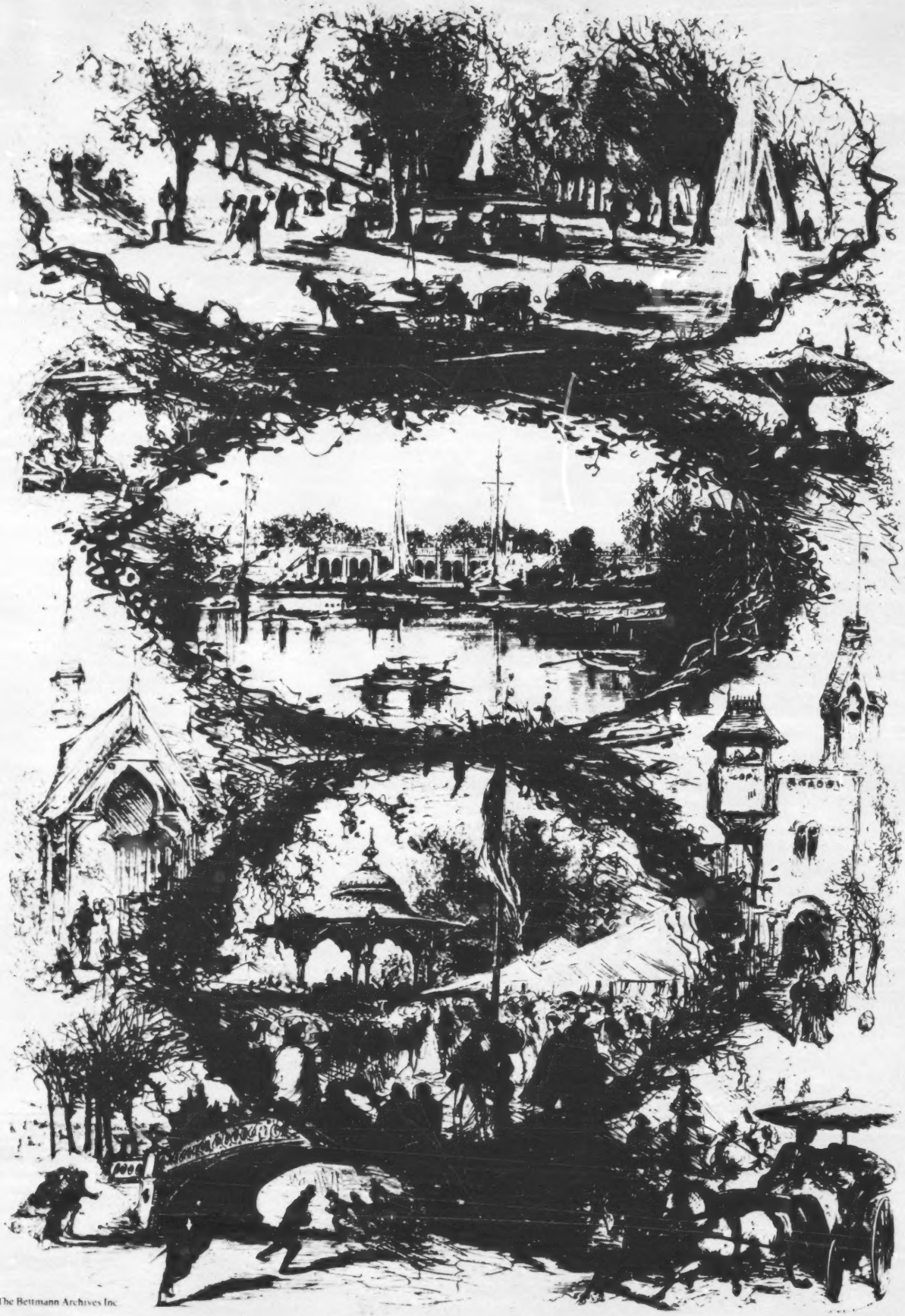
Capture a personal definition of your urban park from your very own experiences. Go there and enjoy the day. When you're back home use your own name to build a park acrostic, an acrostic that will snag in its words what happened to you during that park day or any other. Here's Rhoda Waller's:

**R***ocks shine with silver mica.*
**H***ere is silver in the midst of the city.*
**O***ver everything the blue sky arches, while*
**D***ry leaves dance in the wind and now*
**A** *stone arch leads to the forest.*

How about the park's name telling about its own setting?

**C**
**E**
**N**
**T**
**R**
**A**
**L**

**P**
**A**
**R**
**K**



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# Chapter 5 Bringing it All Together

To form a more full-bodied concept of the park you might want to follow this recipe: take one area of unmanageable rubble and swampland and add

1 part park as work of art
1 part park as "nature in the city"
1 part park as setting.

For that extra flavor, depth, insight, and dynamism add in the historical development. Don't forget the historical ingredient. It's really what makes the recipe work. Our park, Central Park, was at first nothing more than a mere thought. From that thought it became a plan, and from that plan a reality was built during the period from 1858 to 1873.

Once born, the park did not stop growing. It underwent numerous changes and additions from the late nineteenth century to the present day. For instance, the 39 original pathways and drives of 1900 had increased to 101 by 1966. Central Park underwent radical changes of use from strolling, picnicking, and skating on lakes in the early days to twentieth century activities for which playgrounds, skating rinks, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts have been built. Our present park is the result of these changes. The original park is still there, and you can find it if you mentally peel these alterations away.

As a child's development is not always smooth, so too with a park. Often, when park concepts and styles change, park problems arise. For Central Park the original design is quite simply not compatible with large scale, twentieth century, mass events, like rock or classical concerts that attract hundreds of thousands of people. This is a quandary. Do we give up the park as a great work of art? Do we give up the park as a wondrous setting for human activity? Do we somehow change the use of our park?

The activities and ideas that follow are intended to bring it all together. You certainly have come a long way from where we began, unpacking the concept of urban park education. The park is an extraordinary outdoor classroom for everyone.

# Getting a More Holistic Park Outlook and Image

*Large roll of paper*
*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*Your own drawings and photos*
*Shoe boxes*

When Olmsted and Vaux designed Central Park, they showed extraordinary vision. The northern limit of New York City in the 1850s was 42nd Street, and yet they predicted that in the future the city would grow around their park. Indeed it did! Discover your complete park picture as you build it on paper and do some thinking about your park yesterday, today and tomorrow.

**Visual Portraits**
Get out a huge piece of paper. Put that paper on the floor, and lie down on it. Have a friend trace your outline. When your silhouette is done, cut around it carefully. What you've got is a life-size cut-out of you! Create a visual portrait of yourself. Everything about you is important. It's all you. Make your cut-out into a collage. It can be full of ways to show yourself. How about who you used to be? Photos taken at different ages; drawings of all the places you have lived; a family portrait; mementos of places you've been or want to go; and toys and books that are part of your life—all will fill out your portrait. How about what you want to be? Your collage is a history of you as you are today, all that made you, and changes leading you toward who you will be in the future. See if you can do the same thing with your park. For Central Park just start with a large rectangle. Think—then start pasting. You might want to use memories of all you have done in the park yourself, and all that you have seen in the park. Capture your park on paper!

**A Park Time Capsule**
Now here's an idea that can work two ways. Use all your park expertise to design a time capsule to tell people in the future what your park is today. A time capsule is small. It holds just the essence of your park. Selecting the news to pass on is a very important part. Carefully decide what to put in. Choose what's great as well as what's downright disgusting. To be fair, include all that junk, as well as beauty. Put in pictures; they make history something to see! Use your own drawings, and xerox old and new photos. It's great fun to do this in a shoe box. What's the second way? Well, put yourself back in time, and do some research on a park-time long ago. Make a box time capsule that tells what the park was like in 1900, or any date that interests you. Don't just think about it; get moving and decide what to put inside!

**A Park In Time**
Try out your own futuristic thinking. Write or draw what you think *your* urban park will look like in 100 years. Remember that some things will remain the same, some will have changed, and some will be utterly new. The habits we develop keep things the same; change your park habits in your mind. What can you imagine a park could grow to be? Use what's good and bad about the park to guide your thinking, and consider how cities and parks are changing today. What's your park of the future to be!

# An Introduction to Some Park Problems

*Park Explorer's Work Kit*
*Park Explorer's Back Pack*

If urban park education is to be complete, it must convey some disharmony, those conflicts of interest within park design and park use. To include ethics in the consideration of a park concept is essential. The social studies of urban parks includes within it problems as well as successes. To be knowledgeable park citizens is to weigh the realities and the alternatives.

**Selling in the Park**

Have you ever had a hot dog or a drink in the park? Chances are that you have, but have you ever thought about where all those hungry and thirsty visitors put their left-over napkins and cups? Well, many of them don't look around for a trash basket. You can already see the problem. Central Park is located smack in the middle of the city, and if you're *really* hungry it's easy to find a snack nearby, outside the park. The problem is that our park vendors need the business to support themselves. And what about doing business in the park? Is profit-making in keeping with park purposes and goals? What do *you* think? Get a discussion going with a group of people on outlawing vendors from the park. Take sides. A good argument will teach you a lot about the complexity of this issue. Change sides and you will start to understand another point of view. Be a vendor and a protestor. Acting it all out comes easily and makes splendid sense!

**Let's Play! Where's the Ball?**

Outdoor games are fun, and often no equipment is required. Not even a ball. How? Well, do some looking around. There's lots of interesting stuff in a park to make up the best games ever. See what you can design. Games for one or games for many. People all over the world use outdoor places for wonderful fun. Get some books and see what those games are like. Many people who live in cities forget how to use their bodies or how to imagine new ways to use them. But you don't have to. You can solve that problem right in your urban park.

*Do you know that the 120 starlings first released in Central Park in the 1890's are the 'great great grandparents' of the more than 200 million starlings spread throughout the United States.*

**Be a Park Inspector**

Take a step. Stop! Freeze. Do you realize that every time you take a step *you* are having an impact on the environment? Just imagine what thousands of "yous" must do. Make a list of all the different activities in the park that you can think of. Need clues? Think of who uses the park and go from there. Our brainstorming:

baseball
football
lacrosse
jogging
frisbee
strolling
benchsitting
biking
birdwatching
digging
picnicking
rallies and concerts

Got a long list? Try rating their environmental impact. Use words like hard, medium, and light. Ready to be an inspector? Take a trip to the park and see for yourself. Note the impact of your activities on the parkscape. While you're there you might think about noise and the impact of radios on the park environment. When you get back, write up your inspection report. Include recommendations. You just might have some far-reaching solutions.

# Digging Deeper
# Taking an Active Role, Getting Involved

*Muscles and a few simple tools*

There's no better way to develop feelings, attitudes, and modify park behavior than working in the park. Here are some simple and very important park chores you might try out for size. Don't forget to contact your local parks department to get their permission, expertise, and advice for your projects, and their thanks for your work. Your local horticultural society or garden club can also help you out.

**Building New Park Soil**

When the leaves are down in the fall, when there's raking to be done in the park, how about making some new park soil! It's as easy as making a leaf sandwich. Start with a layer of leaves two to four inches deep. Add on top a thin layer of soil and maybe a sprinkle of fertilizer. Now give your sandwich another two to four inch layer of leaves, a thin layer of soil, and so on. You can repeat this formula and build the biggest sandwich ever!! When you reach the top of your pile, make a depression to catch the rain. Turn your pile with a fork every so often, and after a time new beautiful soil will come from your leaves. Remember to keep your compost pile hidden away. It's not such a great view. Put it where only you know that the brewing park soil is located.

**Winterizing Your Park**

There are probably more leaves on the ground than you can use in even the largest compost pile. Want to be a "mulcher"? To mulch a tree or shrub place a two-inch layer of leaves in a circle from the outside tips of its branches to within a couple of feet of the trunk. Your circle should be a ring like a donut, with a hole in the middle. Remember! Don't put leaves up against the trunk for they will rot the bark. Also don't use maple leaves for they will mat down and keep water from reaching the roots. And, one more don't: Don't mulch on grass. Leaves will kill it, not keep it safe. What you are doing is important! Your blanket of leaves keeps the surface of the soil almost the same temperature as the underlying soil. This prevents lots of thawing and freezing and that's what can break roots.

**Looking Forward to Spring**
When you're tired of raking leaves, how about planting some bulbs? It's simple. They just need a hole of a certain depth, a sprinkle of bonemeal in that hole, the placement of the bulb (right side up, if you please), and earth to cover it. When you're done, just wait. Wait till spring and see the beauty you have created.

**Feed the Trees**
If you still have some energy left, perhaps you'll want to try your hand at feeding park plants. Buy some fertilizer pellets. Dig some small holes in a circle around the drip line of a tree. What's a drip line? Well, oddly enough it's just what it sounds like—it's the circle made by the outermost tips of the tree's branches where rain would drip if it did indeed rain. That's where the tree's feeder roots are located. So put your pellets in the holes, fill them in and you've fed a tree!

**Keeping It All in Shape**
If all this is too much gardening for you, perhaps you and some friends could just adopt an area of your park. Pick up, repair, and take care. And help us all to keep our parks clean and beautiful.

# Selected Parks Around the Country

**New York**
The first urban park in the United States, Central Park emerged from swampland and rock to become a masterpiece of landscape architecture. Prospect Park, New York's other great Olmsted and Vaux park, was Brooklyn's answer to Manhattan's Central Park.

**San Francisco**
Golden Gate Park is another tribute to human dreams and determination. Imagine building a whole park on sand dunes!

**Boston**
Olmsted designed for the old city of Boston its "emerald necklace" which includes the picturesque Fens and Franklin Park.

**Philadelphia**
Fairmount Park is the largest in-city park in the United States. Another nineteenth century park, it spreads over 4079 acres.

**Seattle**
In 1903 the landscape firm of Olmsted Brothers created a park system for the city of Seattle. They ingeniously connected existing park spaces by new parkways, incorporated into the system the jewel of Seattle, Volunteer Park, which commands a magnificent hilltop view of Eliot Bay and Puget Sound.

**Chicago**
Chicago's Jackson Park was the site of the famed World Columbian Exposition of 1892. Frederick Law Olmsted (who else?) was the landscape architect to this incredible nineteenth century world's fair.

**Kansas City**
In 1893 a former gardener of Central Park, George Kessler, designed an entire park system for this city.

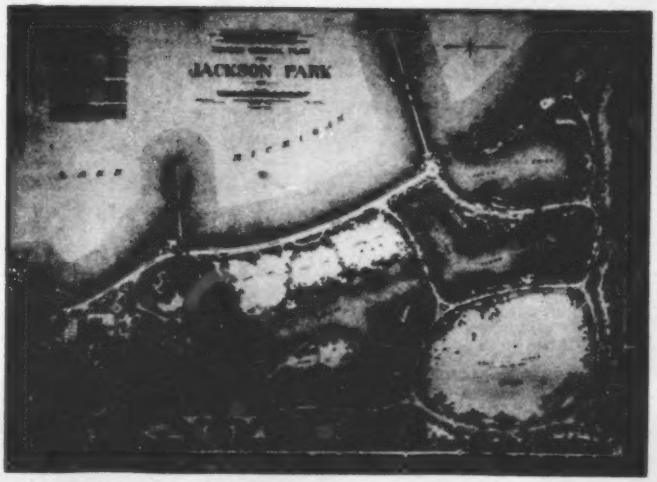
**Detroit**
Half a mile from the downtown area, Belle Isle Park, yet another Olmsted park, sits on an island amidst the Detroit River.

**Minneapolis**
H.W.S. Cleveland designed another "Central Park," later re-named "Loring Park." It is part of a park system that surrounds the city and links the banks of the great Mississippi with a set of beautiful lakes.

**Los Angeles**
Griffith Park, dedicated in 1898, is this city's major nineteenth century park. It perches in the Santa Monica Mountains overlooking downtown Los Angeles.

**Portland**
Forest Park, an incredible 6000 acres, is the largest undesigned natural park within an urban setting.

**Cincinnati**
Imagine a city that is itself a park! George Kessler's plan for Cincinnati proposed not a single outstanding park, nor a system of parks, but a park that was, so to speak, the very city of Cincinnati itself. Though the plan was only partially realized it does represent the ultimate development of the nineteenth century concept of the urban park.



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**Bringing It All Together**

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# Credit Page

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